



*Routledge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Philosophy*

# HEGEL'S METAPHYSICS AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF POLITICS

Edited by  
Michael J. Thompson



# Hegel's Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Politics

The renaissance in Hegel scholarship over the past two decades has largely ignored or marginalized the metaphysical dimension of his thought, perhaps most vigorously when considering his social and political philosophy. Many scholars have consistently maintained that Hegel's political philosophy must be reconstructed without the metaphysical structure that Hegel saw as his crowning philosophical achievement. This book brings together twelve original essays that explore the relation between Hegel's metaphysics and his political, social and practical philosophy. The essays seek to explore what normative insights and positions can be obtained from examining Hegel's distinctive view of the metaphysical dimensions of political philosophy. His ideas about the good, the universal, freedom, rationality, objectivity, self-determination and self-development can be seen in a new context and with renewed understanding once their relation to his metaphysical project is considered. *Hegel's Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Politics* will be of great interest to scholars of Hegelian philosophy, German Idealism, nineteenth-century philosophy, political philosophy and political theory.

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# Hegel's Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Politics

Edited by Michael J. Thompson

First published 2018  
by Routledge  
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

and by Routledge  
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

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*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Names: Thompson, Michael, 1973– editor.

Title: Hegel's metaphysics and the philosophy of politics / edited by Michael J. Thompson.

Description: 1 [edition]. | New York : Taylor & Francis, 2018. |

Series: Routledge studies in nineteenth-century philosophy ; 17 |

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018004857 | ISBN 9781138288515  
(hardback)

Subjects: LCSH: Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, 1770–1831. |  
Metaphysics. | Political science—Philosophy.

Classification: LCC B2948 .H35443 2018 | DDC 193—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018004857>

ISBN: 978-1-138-28851-5 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-26783-8 (ebk)

Typeset in Sabon  
by Apex CoVantage, LLC

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# Introduction

*Michael J. Thompson*

We live in a decidedly anti-metaphysical and even post-metaphysical age, or so we are told. Influential currents in contemporary social, moral and political philosophy, in particular, have been dominated in recent years by a perspective that places emphasis on a constructivist and pragmatic turn, where we are asked to focus on practices of the exchange of reasons, of recognition, justifications, and the kinds of social action that can generate discursive relations of rational agreement on moral questions and problems. This is viewed as non- or post-metaphysical in the sense that any kind of ontological quality to the objective world is no longer assumed, nor is there any legitimacy to claims of transhistorical forms of meaning or substance. As Jürgen Habermas has lucidly framed the post-metaphysical conception of modernity, it

is characterized by a rejection of the substantive rationality typical of religious and metaphysical worldviews and by a belief in procedural rationality and its ability to give credence to our views in the three areas of objective knowledge, moral-practical insight, and aesthetic judgment.<sup>1</sup>

For Habermas, and many other contemporary philosophers, Hegel's metaphysics has been grouped together with the pre-critical metaphysical doctrines of Western philosophical thought. The move toward a pragmatic, procedurally and intersubjective-cognitivist stance has led even further toward a cleavage between Hegel's metaphysical project and the self-described aims of modernity. Objectivity is now construed as the congealed practices and agreements to which rational agents commit themselves. But what has been lost is a connection to the social as more than our cognitive and epistemic practices. Gone from view now is the idea that the social itself as a category possesses ontological weight, that there is some richness to it being distinct from its parts. The fact that Hegel has been decidedly swept up in this new paradigm shift therefore raises serious questions—questions with which the essays gathered in this volume seek to grapple.



The reasons for revisiting Hegel's metaphysical and ontological project are perhaps an important concern to address. One cause for this reexamination of Hegel can be found not in the academic world of technical philosophy but in the increasing pressures of the culture and institutions of the liberal conception of society and the individual, on one hand, and from the deepening effects of market capitalism, on the other. In both cases, we have been asked to consider the idea that the social world does not have ontological validity but is, instead, the result of the intentional actions of individuals. The concept of the good, indeed of the good as a common good, as a normative category has been displaced by the idea of individual conceptions of the good. The shift away from Hegel's metaphysical ideas was carried forward by the emergence and dominance of analytic philosophy in Anglo-American thought throughout the postwar years. A move away from the metaphysical ideas at the heart of Hegel's project, not to mention the increasingly hostile political environment in which American philosophy operated in the shadow of anti-communist activities in the 1950s, meant a shift away from the concerns of continental metaphysics.<sup>2</sup> The very idea that the social can be seen as possessing metaphysical or ontological features has granted the liberal-individualist thesis more weight than it deserves, and Hegel's contributions to understanding modernity—its promises as well as its current pathologies—are largely concealed from view.

Hegel's own philosophical project was driven not by academic or technical concerns with the philosophy of mind or language; it was instead driven by what he saw to be the cultural crisis of his own time. The rise of a narrow form of individuality that the Enlightenment had promulgated was now seen as constituting a severing of the supposedly "free" individual and the social whole of which he or she was a part. The metaphysical was an attempt not to go backward before Kant but an attempt to move toward a more comprehensive grasp of the truth of being by demonstrating the capacity of thought to comprehend the structures and processes that were constitutive of reality. This kind of metaphysics was now oriented toward the project of modernity: toward overcoming the *Entzweiung* between the particular and the totality or, as Lewis Hinchman has put it, "for Hegel true philosophy differentiates itself from enlightenment precisely in attempting to reconstruct, in thought, the wholeness of life that enlightenment has undermined."<sup>3</sup> In this sense, the metaphysical is not a referent to what *precedes* reality, it rather refers to what is internally constitutive of reality and that a true account of reality must move beyond what is immediate and grasp the manifold of the totality. Against the attacks of logical positivism and the influence of the analytic philosophy of language, metaphysics in Hegel's sense concerns the ways that a knowledge of totalities is possible. It is not an attempt at empirical science and knowledge but the demonstration that that kind of knowledge is insufficient to capture the whole of any object. As Robert Wood has

correctly put the matter, a modern approach to metaphysics grasps that the “transcendence of immediacy in the direction of the Whole is the ‘meta’ of metaphysics in human experience.”<sup>4</sup>

This raises a related and more technical issue. In many ways the revival of Hegel studies in the 1990s in Anglo-American philosophy was premised on a reconstruction of Hegel’s ideas along what Klaus Hartmann had called a “non-metaphysical” view over two decades before. For Hartmann, Hegel’s logical categories were to be seen as a categorial scheme that related to reality via the method of the dialectic rather than as categories that are constitutive of reality itself. Hartmann argued that “against the metaphysical reading, Hegel’s philosophy appears to us as a categorial theory, i.e., as non-metaphysical philosophy, or as a philosophy devoid of existence claims and innocent of a reductionism opting for certain existences to the detriment of others.”<sup>5</sup> The main shift here was now to see Hegel’s philosophy as constituted by a fabric of categories that placed Hegel more firmly in line with Kant and moved him away from the metaphysical project of erecting a philosophical system that would be able to comprehend those rational structures that were constitutive of reality.<sup>6</sup>

Following closely on Hartmann’s interpretive move, Terry Pinkard argues that we should see Hegel’s concept of sociality as the key to his theory of reason and his philosophical system more generally:

Understanding that being rational does not consist in expressing some natural property of oneself or adhering to some timeless, transcendent, impersonal standard but in acting in terms of the norms of one’s “social space” is therefore to come to understand *rationality* itself as a form of ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*), as a way of acting and thinking in terms of the “way things are done” understood as a background set of norms.<sup>7</sup>

In this view, the objectivity of our knowledge-claims as well as our moral or normative claims rests on the shared concepts that we take as valid and as rational because they have gained justification by us as members of a community of reason-givers and reason-takers. In this sense, the sociality of reason refers inferentially to a web of concepts that we as a rational community have supplied and justified for ourselves. As Pinkard puts it, “[t]he nature of a thought has to do with its relationships—particularly, its normative, inferential relationships—with other thoughts, and this normative structure itself is historical and social in character.”<sup>8</sup>

For Hegel, it is doubtful that this interpretation would be seen as sufficient. The problem emerges as one where we are essentially unable to grasp the objective processes and structures that constitute our social world: that the social world we inhabit consists of not only norms, to be sure, but also ontologically more complex forms of social reality as these

norms become social structures and processes and ends. In this sense, we need more than an appeal to a “space of reasons” in the Sellarsian sense and instead require a turn toward the ontological features of the metaphysics of our social reality itself, as well as criteria to be able to judge, to critique these forms of life.

Another important trend that leads away from the relation between metaphysics and politics is the emphasis on the concept of recognition in Hegel’s thought. Robert Pippin argues that we are enmeshed in relations of cognitive dependence that confer on our social statuses an objectivity that we as a collectivity take as binding. Hegelian sociality is therefore essentially cognitive, and these cognitive relations are, at base, about recognizing others as worthy or not of the statuses that they hold. Idealism is therefore seen along Kantian lines, as the subjective conceptual categories that make knowledge possible, and the social nature of any conceptual scheme emerges within the structure of recognition and the exchange of reasons we employ for the social statuses that populate our social world: “Reasons are offered and accepted as entitlements and justifications for actions, all with a collective, binding authority, all with varying historical degrees of independence from what is experienced as the natural realm of unavoidable immediate necessity.”<sup>9</sup> Rationality is not concerned with the objective structure of any kind of social ontology but, rather, “to see if one can reflexively defend some norm of principle to which one is committed.”<sup>10</sup> Axel Honneth has also isolated recognition as a central mechanism for practical philosophy by arguing that it constitutes the nucleus for a theory of justice in modern society while also cautioning his readers that Hegel’s metaphysical baggage must be dropped.<sup>11</sup>

The non-metaphysical view therefore asks us to consider a different kind of sociality, one where *Geist* embraces a web of norms that, as Robert Brandom puts it, enables us “to attribute attitudes that have distinctively *normative* significances: to move from a world of *desires* to a world of *commitments, authority, and responsibility*.”<sup>12</sup> Now the intersubjective takes a track separate from the metaphysical ideas that were at the center of Hegel’s initial project as emphasis is taken away from the way we relate to the objective world and instead is placed on the ways we relate to each other. The social world is therefore constituted by the social practices that we use to constitute shared meaning. There is no independent ontology to our structures of social relations or the processes that undergird society as a whole. These social-ontological questions are sidelined in favor of a pragmatic remaking of Hegel’s ideas about conceptually mediated cognition. The relation of pragmatism to the Hegel renaissance, which is entwined with the valorization of the theory of recognition, is therefore a key turn in how his ideas have been elaborated in contemporary philosophy.<sup>13</sup>

In contrast to these interpretive and scholarly trends, however, there is now emerging an interest in the metaphysical ideas that lie at the heart of Hegel's philosophical system and project as a whole.<sup>14</sup> Frederick Beiser has argued that the post-metaphysical interpretation of Hegel has made crucial errors about his importance for western philosophy.<sup>15</sup> For Beiser,

Hegel made metaphysics the foundation of his own philosophy. He began the mature exposition of his system with logic; but he saw logic as an essentially metaphysical discipline, whose task is to determine the nature of being in itself, not merely formal laws of inference.<sup>16</sup>

Hegel's metaphysics is sharply distinct from pre-critical metaphysics in its attempt to understand being immanently, that is, as consisting of rational structures that are constitutive of reality itself.<sup>17</sup> As Stephen Houlgate argues, "[t]he logical structure of the concept of 'something'—a concept that *we* must employ—is at the same time the logical structure of whatever *is* something in the world."<sup>18</sup> Stanley Rosen has also recently argued that Hegel is after truth-claims that are not restricted to linguistic practice, but oriented toward the truth of objective reality:

It is entirely false to say that truth is a linguistic predicate only or even fundamentally. We understand what it means to employ the truth predicate only because we understand the ontological sense of truth. . . . When Hegel says that "the truth of *being* is *essence*," he is referring to ontological truth in two closely related senses. First: he means that truth is a property of states of affairs or processes of actuality. Second: not only is the "property" in question not a linguistic predicate or the name of determinate structural feature of things, but it is the underlying process by which formal structure is produced.<sup>19</sup>

These arguments run directly counter, in many respects, to pragmatist and non-metaphysical interpretations. Indeed, the important question emerges as to the extent to which a critical form of judgment can be rooted in such approaches. How do we avoid the obvious problems of contextual relativism that will sanction different norms or practices? Indeed, Hegel's appeal is that he is offering us the possibility of an objective criteria for truth-claims that conform not to our contextually determined agreement on norms or that emerge from an intersubjective exchange of reasons but, rather, from the objective structures of our social world and the ways that these objective structures instantiate or deform our rational agency and freedom. If judgment can only emerge from our social practices, then the potential of critique is smothered. The ways that our relations with others, our institutions and so on possess an immanent rational structure that we can judge as rational, as promoting

a free life, can be seen from his point of view as possessing a kind of rational weight not because we simply have agreed to them and accepted them into our constellation of concepts and norms but because they have some reference to the ontological reality of our lives as social beings, that there exists not a material but an immanent set of reasons that can provide a ground for the norms we ought to see as valid. As Rolf-Peter Horstmann observes, Hegel

is essentially concerned, in a radical departure from the entire philosophical tradition of the modern period at least, with establishing a new paradigm for the proper philosophical comprehension of reality. The attempt to establish this new paradigm depends entirely for Hegel on successfully communicating a basic insight: that we require an entirely new way of conceptualizing reality, one that is grounded not in the contingent epistemic apparatus of cognitive subjects but in the very constitution of reality itself.<sup>20</sup>

If this is the case, then the non-metaphysical interpretation of Hegel seems to leave us with a crucial weakness that a reconsideration of his metaphysics can help us overcome. For one thing, the confidence of the pragmatist framework on which it is largely based seems more and more to be cracking. Contemporary political and cultural life in modern societies suffers from an increasingly vacuous ethical life and from a kind of epistemic and moral relativism not to mention an erosion of critical forms of judgment capable of calling into question the predominant heteronomous nature of modern social norms rooted in material forms of inequality, social control and rationalized forms of authority and socialization.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, the problems of moral relativism, heteronomy and deflated forms of agency force us to return to the ways that Hegel's ideas provide us with an account of the objective social world in order to anchor the claims of social freedom and a rational society. In this sense, the relation of the concepts we employ to the objective world is in danger of a kind of slippage, a relativism that seals off the realm of the mind and language from the structures and processes that shape the objective world.

Those that advocate the linguistic idealism of pragmatism seem unconcerned by this issue. Brandom, for instance, argues that

this is a misplaced concern. What must not be lost is an appreciation of the way in which our discursive practice is empirically and practically *constrained*. It is not up to us which claims are true (that is, what the facts are). It is in a sense up to us which noises and marks express which claims, and hence, in a more attenuated sense, which express true claims. But empirical and practical constraint on our arbitrary whim is a pervasive feature of our discursive practice.<sup>22</sup>

But this misses a crucial concern, namely, that Hegel's metaphysical ideas implore us to view the social not simply as sociality, as social practices, but also enable us to make rational, objective judgments about the nature of a rational, free form of life and what kinds of social structures, norms, institutions and practices are constitutive of that kind of life. Indeed, we cannot think whatever we may like about what mountains and lamps actually are, and we have a harder time with this problem when it comes to the metaphysics of our sociality, which is composed not of brute facts but, rather, of a social ontology that must be judged based on its capacity for articulating self-realizing, free selves.<sup>23</sup>

Hegel's political philosophy holds out for us the promise of an understanding of freedom that has objective and non-relativistic features. The pragmatist's error is to try to view the reflexivity of moral values and moral cognition as features of practices that instantiate a common ethical life. But this misses the point that Hegel wants to make, namely, that there is a need to grasp the actual structures of sociality beyond any mere noumenal intersubjective nexus, that there exist social structures and processes that have ontological richness. In contrast to the pragmatic strain of interpretation that sees us as generating the social world, we should instead view the matter, as Andrew Buchwalter has argued, as one of "reconstructive idealism." In this view, "[t]he task of a metaphysic of reality is precisely to restate empirically received claims so that they conform to the requirements of spirit and the notion of autonomous rationality connoted by it."<sup>24</sup> This insight leads us to quarrel with some of the basic ideas that the post-metaphysical view puts forth, and it suggests a more compelling path to move toward if we can clarify the relation between the metaphysical ideas Hegel has in view and the normative aspirations of his practical philosophy. From the point of view of practical and political philosophy, Hegel's metaphysical project should therefore be seen as an important frontier to generate more insight at a time when the promises of pragmatism and post-metaphysics seem unable to deliver a compelling practical philosophy.

All of this is meant as a prelude for the essays that follow. The following chapters therefore seek to explore Hegel's metaphysical ideas and their relation to political and practical philosophy with an aim toward widening the scholarly focus on Hegel's ideas. They are in line with the attempt to build out a coherent metaphysical foundation for Hegel's political and practical ideas that can serve to open new interpretive frames and perhaps deal with what is looking like an increasing crisis of modernity. These are meant to be taken in tandem with the ongoing scholarly appreciation of Hegel's ideas that have been flourishing in recent decades and to chart a new avenue for interpreting one of the most significant thinkers of the modern age.

## Notes

- 1 Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 3–4.
- 2 See the important discussions by John McCumber, *Time in the Ditch: American Philosophy and the McCarthy Era*. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 142ff., as well as his *The Philosophy Scare: The Politics of Reason in the Early Cold War*. (Chicago, IL: University of the Chicago Press, 2016), 56ff.
- 3 Lewis P. Hinchman, *Hegel's Critique of the Enlightenment*. (Tampa, FL: University Presses of Florida, 1984), 3.
- 4 Robert E. Wood, “Preface” to *The Future of Metaphysics*. (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970), vi.
- 5 Klaus Hartmann, “Hegel: A Non-Metaphysical View,” in Alasdair MacIntyre (ed.), *Hegel: A Collection of Critical Essays*. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), 110.
- 6 See Klaus Hartmann, *Die ontologische Option*. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1976), 1–30.
- 7 Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 124.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 88.
- 9 Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 194.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 224.
- 11 Axel Honneth, *The Pathologies of Individual Freedom: Hegel's Social Theory*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010). For a good critique of the project to make recognition the basis for a practical philosophy, see Alfredo Ferrarin, “Hegel on Recognition: Self-Consciousness, Individuality and Intersubjectivity,” in Italo Testa and Luigi Ruggiu (eds.), “*I That Is We, We That Is I.*” *Perspectives on Contemporary Hegel*. (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 253–270.
- 12 Robert Brandom, “The Structure of Desire and Recognition: Self-Consciousness and Self-Constitution,” *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol. 33, no. 1 (2007): 127–150, 135. Also see his *Tales of the Mighty Dead: Historical Essays in the Metaphysics of Intentionality*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002) as well as *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), particularly 3–66.
- 13 See Richard J. Bernstein, *The Pragmatic Turn*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 89ff.
- 14 See, for instance, the recent collection of essays by Allegra de Laurentiis (ed.), *Hegel and Metaphysics: Logic and Ontology in the System*. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016) as well as Italo Testa and Luigi Ruggiu (eds.), “*I That Is We, We That Is I.*” *Perspectives on Contemporary Hegel*. (Leiden: Brill, 2016).
- 15 Frederick Beiser, “Hegel, a Non-Metaphysician? A Polemic,” *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain*, vol. 16, no. 2 (1995): 1–13.
- 16 Frederick Beiser, *Hegel*. (New York: Routledge, 2005), 53.
- 17 For the roots of Hegel's program with respect to Kant's *Ding an sich*, see Beatrice Longuenesse, *Hegel's Critique of Metaphysics*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 10ff as well as Ivan Soll, *An Introduction to Hegel's Metaphysics*. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 47ff.
- 18 Stephen Houlgate, “Hegel's Logic,” in Frederick Beiser (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 111–134, 118. Lewis P. Hinchman similarly

- argues that “[t]he universal is just as much in re as it is a subjective activity, or, to reintroduce an earlier distinction, thinking and being are essentially identical.” *Hegel’s Critique of the Enlightenment*, 46.
- 19 Stanley Rosen, *The Idea of Hegel’s Science of Logic*. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 235–236.
  - 20 Rolf-Peter Horstmann, “Substance, Subject and Infinity: A Case Study of the Role of Logic in Hegel’s System,” in Katerina Delgiorgi (ed.), *Hegel: New Directions*. (London: Acumen Press, 2006), 69–84, 73.
  - 21 For a discussion of this problem, see my paper “Collective Intentionality, Social Domination and Reification,” *Journal of Social Ontology*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2017): 207–229.
  - 22 Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 331.
  - 23 For an interesting counter-discussion to the pragmatist reading of Hegel, see Frederick Neuhauser, “Hegel on Social Ontology and the Possibility of Pathology,” in Italo Testa and Luigi Ruggiu (eds.), “*I That Is We, We That Is I.*” *Perspectives on Contemporary Hegel*, 31–48.
  - 24 Andrew Buchwalter, “A Critique of Non-Metaphysical Readings of Hegel’s Practical Philosophy,” in Allegra de Laurentiis (ed.), *Hegel and Metaphysics: On Logic and Ontology in the System*, 71–87, 73. Also see the discussion by David P. Schweikard, “The Critique of Non-Metaphysical Readings of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*,” in Lisa Herzog (ed.), *Hegel’s Thought in Europe: Currents, Crosscurrents and Undercurrents*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).





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Part I

# The Relation of Hegel's Metaphysics and Political Theory



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# 1 The Course of God

## Reading Hegel

*Peter J. Steinberger*

In *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*, Josiah Royce suggests that

[i]f Hegel taught anything, then what he taught can be conveyed in an utterly non-Hegelian vocabulary, or else Hegel is but a king of the rags and tatters of flimsy terminology, and no king of thought at all. It is therefore absolutely the duty of a man who nowadays supposes that he has any truth from Hegel to propound, to state it in an entirely fresh and individual form. Of Hegelian language repeated to us in place of Hegelian thought, we have had by this time a sickening surfeit.<sup>1</sup>

Such an observation, which seems to me plainly true, is certainly as germane to the study of Hegel's political thought as it is to any other region of his philosophy, and it poses a particular problem for scholars of the *Philosophy of Right* (henceforth *PdR*), namely, how to make manageable sense of the larger system out of which that work emerges. Of course, to engage this problem in a truly satisfactory way is nearly impossible; the system, by its very nature, is utterly ill suited to the kind of abbreviation and paraphrase that might make it genuinely tractable. But the task is also necessary, if, that is, one wants to understand what Hegel has to say about politics. For while we know that a generation of influential scholars, working in the second half of the last century, sought to describe a Hegelian political theory that is separate from and innocent of the basic claims of Hegelian metaphysics, it's hard to see how such a project could be at all tenable.<sup>2</sup> In writing about right and the state, Hegel does not simply make a series of assertions but, rather, explicitly and pointedly embeds those assertions in an elaborate structure of argumentation designed in part to show why they are true, and it is equally clear that the structure itself is to be understood as composing, in the end, nothing less than the totality of what Hegel calls philosophical science. That, at any rate, is how he himself intended his political thought to be comprehended. But what this means is that to approach *PdR* without examining its metaphysical grounding is, in effect, to invent a new theory

of politics that, however edifying and useful, has rather little to do with what Hegel actually said.<sup>3</sup>

The challenge becomes perhaps especially acute, though also perhaps especially revealing, when one encounters the most central of Hegelian claims concerning the very idea of political society. In the *Zusatz* to §258 of *PdR*,<sup>4</sup> we encounter the famous—or infamous—notation that “the state is the course of God in the world [*der Gang Gottes in der Welt*].” This is, in effect, a gloss on the immediately preceding proposition, namely, that “the state is *Geist* that is present in the world,” which, in turn, is an elaboration of Hegel’s own Remark to §258 where he says that the principle of the state has “thought” (*Gedanke*) both as its form and as its content, hence is nothing other than “thinking (*Denken*) itself.” Clearly, we cannot begin to understand these important passages unless we try to make some sense, however preliminary, of what Hegel means by, above all, the notion of *Geist*. But again, fully to engage such a question would require an exploration of the Hegelian project more or less in its entirety, for the fact is that Hegel conceived of his philosophical system as a system in the strongest sense of the word. The various parts are connected to one another in deep and complicated ways, and the result is a kind of hermetic and seamless whole. Indeed, a penchant for wholeness—for organic synthesis—seems to be a basic and defining feature of Hegel’s cast of mind, and one consequence is that nothing in his system admits of simple definition. All things must eventually be understood in light of their connections with everything else, and the putative outcome—an apparently impenetrable structure of endless interpenetration—seems only to have encouraged political theorists to try to save Hegel’s political thought from the opacity and supposed obsolescence of his metaphysics.

For our purposes, the implication is that a truly satisfying and comprehensive analysis of what Hegel means by *Geist* would seem to require nothing less than a full and detailed consideration of, presumably, his *Enzyklopädie*—something obviously light years beyond what could be accomplished in an essay (and light years, as well, beyond the ambitions of the present author). But what perhaps can be offered here is an attempt to describe in broad terms the general *character* of Hegelian speculation per se and to outline thereby the basic structure of argument—the distinctive manner of thinking—that underwrites his theory of the state. It is to such an effort that the present essay is devoted. I propose to consider, specifically, the *kind* of thing that Hegel is talking about when he talks about *Geist*, understood as somehow embodying or representing the universe of discourse out of which emerges the world of politics in general and the concept of right in particular.

*Geist* is usually rendered in English either as “spirit” or as “mind,” though any number of alternative translations might be plausible, for example, intellect, intelligence, wit. I believe these various renderings to be at once accurate and misleading. They are misleading in that their

usual connotations in English fail to do justice to, perhaps even distort, the idea of *Geist* as it actually operates in Hegel's thought. Thus, for example, the word *spirit* may conjure up a kind of arcane and elusive mysticism, thereby leading the casual reader to suppose that Hegelian philosophy involves arbitrary and unsupported assertions about irrational, otherworldly things. Similarly, the word *mind* might, in certain contexts, suggest the faculty of a discrete individual being, hence encourage the idea that Hegel is talking about some kind of strange, transcendent, supernatural person or deity whose thoughts are somehow omniscient and omnipotent. Since none of this has much connection with the perspective that Hegel actually adopts, it would be good to gain some independent purchase on the notion of *Geist*, if only for the purpose of being clear about what he is not saying. What kind of philosophical work is *Geist* supposed to do? How is that work done? In what ways is it similar to and different from the types of conceptual materials that we find elsewhere in the philosophical literature? Answering such questions in plain language—in, as Royce says, an “utterly non-Hegelian vocabulary”—can provide, I would propose, a useful pathway into the alleged mysteries of Hegel's mind and, by necessary implication, into the underlying logic of his idea of the state.

## 1

I propose to look at *Geist* by means of an analogy, specifically an analogy with mathematics. Now *mathematics* is, of course, a term that we use quite freely in ordinary conversation, but its reference is not entirely straightforward. Our intuition is that it has to do with quantitative things, that it involves the rigorous analysis of those things, that individuals systematically engaged in that kind of analysis are mathematicians, that groups of mathematicians in a college or university often compose a department of mathematics and the like. If we unpack all of this, however, I think we can see that our concept of mathematics, in fact, contains a number of quite distinct, albeit interrelated, elements.

To begin with, mathematics is understood as an activity. It is something that people do, like tennis or cooking. As a rather widely recognized and frequently well-organized activity, we may say that mathematics has the features of what philosophers used to call a “practice.”<sup>5</sup> This means, among other things, that it is an activity governed by more or less explicit rules. These rules are constitutive of the practice; they make mathematics what it is such that to violate the rules is no longer properly to be doing mathematics.

There is, of course, a certain inconvenience inherent in this or any other practice. Specifically, the rules may change, and it is, as a result, often difficult to know when the rules are being legitimately revised and when they are being violated. The ambiguity seems to me unavoidable; it

is a characteristic of all practices. But while ambiguity may well be, from a philosophical point of view, the most interesting feature of a practice, from the perspective of the relevant practice itself it's rather secondary. For the fact is that most of the rules of a practice are clear and uncontroversial most of the time. If this were not the case, if the rules were truly ineffable, undiscoverable or radically unstable, then the practice simply would not be a practice, that is, an established, ongoing social activity the principles of which can be observed and utilized with some reliability. In the instant case, mathematics would not be what it is, namely, an intellectual discipline wherein some procedures and answers are clearly, recognizably right, others clearly, recognizably wrong.

This sketch suggests that the word *mathematics*, in fact, denotes two quite different things: first, the set of rules that constitute the practice and, second, the actual activity of following (to the degree possible) those rules. Stated otherwise, mathematics is both a social institution and a kind of human action. The former is roughly what a sociologist might call a "social fact" insofar as it is what it is apart from what any particular individual does. For example, if some number of individual mathematicians suddenly stopped doing mathematics, or stopped doing it properly, one could nevertheless claim that mathematics as a practice continues to exist (albeit rather more quietly than before). The latter—mathematics as a kind of human action—is an individual fact. It simply describes something that particular people do (though they often do it in concert with other people) and that derives its identity from the fact that doing mathematics is different in specifiable ways from what people do when they play tennis or cook or do all of the other things that people do. Mathematics, then, is both of these.

But it is something else besides. For we use the word *mathematics* to describe not simply the practice and the activity of following the practice but also the content to which the practice is directed and the actual fruits of the activity. Mathematics, in short, is the sum total of true mathematical axioms and theorems. Our own language amply reflects this. To pursue mathematics certainly is in part to pursue the rules of the practice, but surely it is also to examine the substance, to learn the truths that mathematics has to offer. One *does* mathematics, but one also *studies* mathematics as one studies a (very complex) thing. The thing itself, moreover, has two quite different aspects. For the substance of mathematics is, to begin with, composed of all currently known mathematical axioms and theorems. To have knowledge of mathematics is to know as many of those axioms and theorems as possible together with their respective rationales or proofs. But there are a great many people who investigate the substance of mathematics in order not simply to learn what is already known but to discover, in addition, what is not currently known. Thus, and in principle, mathematics contains not just all established mathematical truths but also all those that are as yet

undiscovered. This may seem odd; one cannot specify the nature of those as yet undiscovered truths precisely because they are as yet undiscovered. Nonetheless, it appears that we cannot possibly deny that they exist—the desire to discover new mathematical truths is one of the main reasons for studying mathematics—and thus, we cannot but include them as an important part of mathematics.

There is yet a further complication here, for the relationship between the region of mathematics that is known and the region that is not yet known may be problematic in a very special way. Specifically, new discoveries in mathematics may lead us to the conclusion that certain old and established truths are, in fact, not true at all. We certainly do not count this as a bad thing; to demonstrate the falsity of what was previously thought true is, by some accounts, very nearly a definition of rational progress. But it does suggest that although we are interested in studying the substance of mathematics, we are or ought to be aware that that substance itself may have, strangely enough, a certain character of instability and unreliability. This might suggest, in turn, that the content of mathematics is unfixed, evasive, changeable. Yet such a suggestion would be, in the end, unacceptable or, at best, non-mathematical. For as mathematicians we are virtually forced to presuppose that, in fact, there is somewhere a fixed, permanent and absolutely certain truth to mathematics, if only we can discover it. This truth would be composed of, roughly, the complete and entire gamut of all possible correct mathematical principles and propositions. When we study the substance of mathematics, we are, in fact, studying established mathematical truths in the hope of going beyond those truths to discover something that is truer, which can then, in turn, clarify the degree to which the established truths are, in fact, true. If, as Gödel suggests, mathematical hope is ultimately forlorn, this provides no argument against the claim that the aim is, in no small part, constitutive of the activity.

One last feature of mathematics requires our attention. I refer to the long-standing controversy about the relationship between mathematical truth and the world “out there,” by which I mean the natural, observable, physical world in which we happen to find ourselves. There is, specifically, a question about whether truth claims in mathematics can be tested somehow through empirical observation of that natural world. And I think that, at present, most would hold that such truths cannot be tested in that way, that their correctness or incorrectness is not a matter of correspondence with external nature but is, rather, a matter of internal consistency. Ultimately, the world of mathematics is a world of ideas. While those ideas may well have practical applications, in fact, they are true only in virtue of the rules of inference and analysis that constitute the practice of mathematics itself.

What we have here, of course, is a kind of coherence theory. It holds, roughly, that a mathematical proposition must be considered true if the



denial of that proposition necessarily leads one to make contradictory or inconsistent claims. Anyone who contradicts him- or herself is incoherent; incoherence is the opposite of making sense; to make sense is a minimum condition for speaking the truth; hence, to propose a contradiction is to propose something that is necessarily false.<sup>6</sup> As a world of pure ideas, then, the criterion of correctness in mathematics is simply and solely the criterion of coherence.

Mathematics is, thus, not one thing, but four: an individual intellectual activity, an institutionalized social practice, a body of accepted propositions and a partially hidden universe of absolutely true and undeniable ideas. Now I want to propose that a precisely analogous set of characteristics provides, as well, a rather precise account—a virtual definition—of *Geist* as it functions in Hegel's philosophical system. The analogy with mathematics is, at least up to a point, exact and exhaustive.

Specifically—and proceeding in somewhat reverse order—*Geist* is the sum total of all possible coherent ideas and judgments about the world; it is, so to speak, the complete textbook of truly conceivable logical propositions, of all justified and demonstrable truth claims, hence stands as a compendium of what is possible for human beings coherently to think. This, roughly, is what Hegel calls Absolute *Geist*—"its true content is nothing other than the whole system whose development we have been studying up to now" (Hegel, *Enzyklopädie* Par. 237 *Zusatz*). It is what human thought would be—or will be—when all of its inconsistencies and self-contradictions have been resolved regarding our beliefs about how things in the world really are. It is the definitive and final structure of reality as we understand it, an encyclopedia—literally and figuratively—of human knowledge.

But *Geist* also refers, second, to the range of known and accepted propositions—authoritative truth claims—at any given point in (historical) time. Since this range of propositions is almost certainly partial and not fully coherent, it falls short of Absolute *Geist*, but as such, it must also be seen as a step in the direction of that Absolute; hence, it should be thought of as *Geist* at a particular moment in its historical unfolding. When Hegel speaks of the *Geist* of the ancient Greeks or of medieval Europe, for example, he is referring to the intellectual/cultural apparatus of an age both as an identifiable and distinctive entity in itself and as a partial, not yet fully explicated and ultimately unsatisfying stage in the self-unfolding of the Absolute.

Thus, *Geist* refers to the substance of both possible and existing human thought. But third, it refers also to the process of thinking itself as governed above all by the so-called laws of thought. It pertains not simply to the sum total of rational propositions but also to the method or process by which those propositions are arrived at and demonstrated. It is, in short, rationality itself. As such, it is a social institution characterized by rules and principles and animated by a single overriding goal, viz.,

the discovery and explication of Absolute *Geist*. One could say that, for Hegel, *Geist* is roughly equivalent to the practice of philosophy per se, but he would define philosophy far more broadly than we usually do, preferring to call it “philosophical science” and including within its scope not only all manner of systematic rational inquiry such as logic, mathematics and empirical science, but also the gamut of ordinary forms of discourse of a kind that most humans engage in, one way or another, and that compose the lineaments of everyday social existence.

Finally, *Geist* also denotes an individual way of life, a particular kind of activity or being-in-the-world involving, at base, a disposition to be rational. For Hegel, to be human is to participate in *Geist*—to participate in the practice of rational thought—and this means to act in a manner that is consistent with and authorized by the rules of reason. A life is *geistig* if it is lived not on the basis of physical desire, emotional impulse, unthinking prejudice or blind obedience but in terms of those laws and principles that govern all thinking that aspires to make sense.

It is for these reasons, incidentally, that “mind” seems to me the least bad English translation of *Geist*. Mind refers generally both to the content of a purely intellectual faculty—its thoughts or beliefs—and to the faculty itself. As such, it serves to emphasize the fact that what we are talking about here is essentially a realm of ideas, a mental or intellectual realm.

## 2

Obviously the world of mathematics is a limited world. Even the sum total of all true mathematical axioms and theorems would still be a world of strictly quantitative ideas. Other kinds of ideas would be excluded. These might involve such grandiose notions as substance and accident, appearance and reality, faith and reason, beauty and the sublime. They would certainly involve concepts of freedom, right and the state—the focus of Hegel’s political thought. But they would also involve the infinite range of “qualitative” concepts, many of them quite homely, that we regularly use in order to classify and make sense of the world about us, concepts such as dog, red, table and the like. Each of these is, we might say, an abstraction that functions as a receptacle of meaning on the basis of which we categorize and define the various, untold features of our world. Our concepts permit us to make sense of that world such that we can talk with one another about it intelligently. Of course, many of our concepts do indeed have quantitative features and, to that extent, would be subject to mathematical analysis, but most of them would also have non-quantitative features and would require, as a result, a different kind of analysis.

Now Hegel’s view is that, from the perspective of human cognition, ideas or concepts are, in a complex but non-trivial sense that I hope to

explore, all that there is. This is largely what makes Hegel a philosophical idealist. But his idealism is of a quite specific and not immediately obvious nature. It is certainly not what is sometimes called a “dogmatic idealism,” of the kind held by Bishop Berkeley, who argued, among other things, that the world is not at all material, that physical matter just does not exist, that all of reality is utterly ideal. Such a view, though presented by Berkeley with considerable ingenuity, is (despite what Berkeley explicitly says) deeply counterintuitive, and Hegel’s disposition is not at all to undermine our ordinary intuitions but, rather, to explicate them. He is not, therefore, inclined to deny the existence of what we call material things.

Of course, Kant also rejects Berkeley’s idealism and proposes, in its place, what he calls “critical idealism” or what might otherwise be thought of as a kind “skeptical idealism.” Such an idealism is based on three interrelated claims: (1) The world as known by us can only be the world that we experience, (2) our experience of the world presupposes rather than produces a conceptual apparatus, and (3) we have therefore arrived at the truth of the world only when our conceptual apparatus—the full gamut of our ideas and beliefs, including our ideas and beliefs about so-called sense experience—is internally coherent. To understand Hegel, I suggest, requires that we understand how he both embraces and also seeks to supersede precisely these Kantian claims, producing thereby not a skeptical or critical idealism but an “Absolute idealism.”<sup>7</sup>

(1) It is common for philosophers to distinguish the real world from the world as it is experienced and understood by humans. The former contains the truth of things, the latter a more or less accurate account of that truth. Our ideas, theories and beliefs are true simply to the extent that they correspond to the real world “out there.” Now there is a sense in which Kant does not at all deny this; he is perfectly willing to accept the notion that there is indeed a world beyond that which we experience, a world that is in some sense and to some degree responsible for our experiences and that is, so to speak, real in a way that our experiences might not be. But what he does deny is that this has anything to do with “truth,” at least as far as that is for us a useful category.

The reason is, at least in the first instance, simple enough. If there is, in fact, a world separate from human experience—which is to say separate from all possible human experience—then this obviously is a world that we cannot intelligently engage, a world we simply cannot possibly know in any meaningful sense. Perhaps God could know that world, if there is a God. But humans are, by definition, not God, and the question of what is true from a God’s-eye point of view—the question of the nature of what Kant calls the “thing in itself”—is meaningless and irrelevant from a human’s-eye point of view.<sup>8</sup> As humans, we are stuck or imprisoned—hopelessly and eternally, or at least as long as we continue to be humans—in the human’s-eye point of view, and this means that

there is absolutely no way of checking the results of our experiences and inquiries against a reality that transcends, and hence is opaque to, our point of view. The upshot is that, for Kant, certain standard questions of Western dogmatic metaphysics—Does God exist? Is reality material or ideal? What is the true nature of things?—cannot be answered in a way that produces genuine knowledge.

In a sense, Hegel is sympathetic to such a view. We might say, provisionally, that he believes that our ideas and concepts are all that there is, and we might say that he means this, in a certain sense, from a human's-eye point of view rather than a God's-eye point of view. Ideas and concepts—the materials and the fruit of *Geist*—are all that there is *for us*. And since, as far as we mere humans can tell, there is nothing but us, this will have to suffice. To this extent, Hegel's account is deeply Kantian. But in fact, his view actually goes well beyond, and is far more radical, than Kant's, though in ways that have not been often recognized.

(2) In formulating a so-called critical system, Kant tackles the following difficult question: Isn't it the case that our ideas and beliefs must be caused by something external to them? Or, stated otherwise, do we not have experiences prior to having concepts, and do not those experiences provide a kind of solid "substrate" against which to test our ideas? It's a plausible suggestion. For example, it certainly seems that babies—like animals—have preconceptual experiences of the world. Might not those experiences be the building blocks out of which our concepts arise? Indeed, this seems to be a kind of standard intuition. But one doesn't understand Kant nor, I suggest, Hegel until one understands that it is something to be explicitly and pointedly rejected. In Kant's account, to have an "experience" in the proper sense of the word *presupposes* a conceptual apparatus. Absent such an apparatus, one does not really have experiences but only raw feels, perhaps something akin to what we might imagine lower life-forms—germs or insects, for example—to have, and we cannot simply or unproblematically get from raw feels to experiences. The latter are not entailed by, and cannot be derived from, the former. Kant thinks of an experience as an event of some kind, often a sensation, that is *registered* by the mind; registering it means placing it in some kind of intellectual context so that the event can be distinguished from and related to other events; and for the mind to register an event, it must already have thought-categories—intuitions and conceptual materials—according to which the event can be identified in terms of its place, time, qualities and the like.

Kant thus holds the view—and Hegel agrees—that there can be no percepts without precepts. And this means that in an important sense the world as we understand it is a world that is shaped, arranged and rendered meaningful by us. Our world is fundamentally *geistig*. Kant—though, as we'll see shortly, not Hegel—would concede that our efforts in this regard are constrained or guided by the real world "out there." But

the character of that world is a question for the God's-eye point of view, not ours; it's not something that we could ever know, not to any degree whatsoever, since we can never take the God's-eye point of view. All that we have is the world of human experience as organized or constructed on some basis according to the categories of human thought.

(3) How, then, do we know that we've got it right, that our ideas about the world are true? After all, since we are, on a Kantian account, limited to the human's-eye point of view, there seems to be no way to test our experiences and ideas against the true world out there. It's an old problem that has persisted long after Kant—Quine asks, “[H]ow much of our science is merely contributed by language and how much is a genuine reflection of reality?”<sup>9</sup>—but one to which Kant provides a distinctive, revolutionary and deceptively simple answer. In his view, there can be only one valid test of the truth of our ideas, namely, do they make sense. And this, in turn, can mean only one thing: Do our various ideas comport with one another so as to produce a world of experiences and propositions that is free from contradiction? To contradict oneself—to say that something is, at the same time, both what it is and what it isn't—is to fail to make sense, and nonsense can never be accepted or understood as even intelligible, much less true. If, though, we can construct a complete, coherent system of propositions about the world—a structure of claims that is utterly and entirely free of contradiction—then we would have accomplished all that could be accomplished and, indeed, all that we would ever need. Such a structure, insofar as it is internally coherent, would make perfect sense; and insofar as it is complete, in the sense that it addresses all of our questions, it would constitute, in effect, a definitive and comprehensive account of what is, from our perspective, true. As in the case of mathematics, truth is simply and solely a matter of coherence.

Is it not possible, though, that we could arrive at a complete, coherent system of propositions about the world that would nonetheless be, from a God's-eye point of view, entirely wrong? It's hard to see how an orthodox Kantian could confidently rule out such a possibility, but I think he or she would also find it deeply uninteresting and utterly irrelevant to the real question of truth. For again, to talk about the God's-eye point of view is to talk unintelligible gibberish, since we are humans limited to the human's-eye point of view. The complete and coherent system of all possible propositions would be, by definition, the culmination of human thought. As such, it would have to be, for us, the truth—a truth that is unassailable, unrevisable and entirely, permanently immune to human criticism.

Again, I believe that Hegel would accept much of this.<sup>10</sup> But there is a crucial and massive difference that can perhaps be best described by means of another and quite different analogy. In formulating his argument, Kant criticizes David Hume perhaps above all, and his criticism focuses on, among other things, the notion of causation.<sup>11</sup> According

to Hume, our thoughts about the world, and hence our knowledge of the world, are rooted in and limited by sense perception—by our direct observation of physical objects and of their movements in space and time—and this means that we can never actually observe, and can have no real knowledge of, causal relations among those objects. Hume recognizes that we use the conception of causation all the time—it is an essential feature of scientific thinking—but his view is, of course, that such a conception is merely a convenient fiction, useful in helping us organize our experiences but not really a matter of knowledge. Kant's criticism of this account is severe and telling: If our thoughts about the world are merely reflections of—are all traceable to—our observations of physical objects and their movements in space and time, and if cause is not something that we can actually observe, then where does the idea of causation come from? If we cannot actually observe or otherwise experience cause, how did the idea occur to us in the first place? Whence did it arise? It seems that Hume's approach is indeed powerless satisfactorily to address this question. And in the face of this, Kant says that there is and can be only one possible answer: We must presuppose that the notion of causation is part of our intellectual or conceptual apparatus—it composes part of the form of human cognition—and is, as such, something that we possess prior to and independently of our empirical engagement with the world. Of course, for Kant the analysis is not limited to the concept of causation. Rather, it includes a large list of intuitions and categories that seem not to be entailed by or derivable from the pure raw materials of physical sensation. Here, now, we have a formulation that marks a momentous change, a revolution of, as is often said, Copernican proportions. Rather than knowledge being the result of the world out there imposing itself on us via the senses, as Hume and many others would have it, we should understand it rather as a process by which we impose a system of intelligibility—an organized set of categories—onto experience by deploying intuitions and conceptual materials that compose the very structure of human thought itself.

Hegel, I would suggest, offers an analogous criticism of Kant. Kant had insisted that our thoughts about the world reflect an unknowable realm of things in themselves that exist outside of our intellectual activity but that are eternally opaque and about which we can say nothing intelligible. But Hegel asks, in effect, a Kantian question: Where did the very idea of such a realm come from in the first place? If our intellectual or cognitive engagement with the world is entirely a matter of deploying an already-available intuitive and conceptual apparatus, then the notion of a world “out there” must itself be the product of that apparatus. But this means, in turn, that such a notion cannot but be a contradiction in terms, for if the idea of an external world is a product of our thought, then such an idea is not really external at all. It is, and absolutely must be, purely and entirely internal. The notion of a distinction between, say,

a human's-eye point of view and a God's-eye point of view thus turns out to be a kind of conceptual error. The idea of a God's-eye point of view is *our* thought—part of *our* apparatus or our point of view—and, as such, undermines itself as a kind of internal incoherence that has to be dismissed as untenable.

In paragraph 85 of the *Phenomenology of Mind*, Hegel writes,

The object indeed appears to be for consciousness only as consciousness knows it; it seems that consciousness cannot, so to speak, get behind the way in which exists for consciousness so as to examine what it is *in itself*, and thus it cannot test its own knowledge.

Here, Hegel echoes Kant. But he continues:

[I]n the fact that consciousness has knowledge of an object, there is already present the distinction between what the thing is in-itself [on the one hand] and knowledge [on the other]. Something is *for it* the *in-itself*; and knowledge, or the being of the object for consciousness, is, *for it*, another moment.

He goes on to say that “the testing is not only a testing of knowledge, but also a testing of the criterion [of what knowing is],” and he concludes (in paragraph 86) that the result of this process is “*the new true object (der neue wahre Gegenstand)*.” Here, to be sure, we run forcefully into Josiah Royce’s warnings about the obscurity of Hegelian language and of the need to render his thought in plain terms. But I suggest that Hegel’s meaning is, at least up to a point, clear enough. The question of the relationship between human thought and the outside world is a question that has been posed by, and is entirely within the ambit of, human thought itself. Strictly speaking, then, there really is no coherent or intelligible notion of a world out there—not even an unknowable world of things in themselves. Just as the Humean idea of causation is comprehensible only as part of our conceptual apparatus, so is the Kantian idea of a conceptual apparatus comprehensible only as part of *itself*—as part of *Geist*—and there are literally no thoughts, no questions, no problems outside of that. It’s not that we cannot have knowledge of external reality. It’s that the question really cannot even be formulated, since any formulation will be internal to mind, to *Geist*. The question of the relationship between thought and thing is not an intelligible question at all. Thus, according to Frederick Beiser,

[a]gainst Kant, Hegel insisted that the criticism of knowledge must be internal, so that the subject matter is evaluated according to its own inherent standards and goals.”<sup>12</sup> And from this it seems to follow that the thing in itself “has no identity at all. . . . It is therefore something that neither can nor need be spoken of.”<sup>13</sup>



My suggestion, in effect, is that Hegel's idealism is, in fact, the most radical and thoroughgoing and, possibly, the most coherent idealism of all, the necessary consequence of the Kantian revolution. Here I think that I'm at least in part agreeing with McDowell, who argues that, according to Hegel, "we need to bring the conditions [of knowledge] inside the sphere of free intellectual activity."<sup>14</sup> With explicit reference to the *Phenomenology*, McDowell elaborates as follows:

[W]e have a series of attempted conceptions of mindedness, the progression through which is supposed to reveal finally that what they are attempted conceptions of is properly conceived as the free movement of the Notion [as thought by *Geist*]. "Experience" is a label for what befalls these attempted conceptions.<sup>15</sup>

The upshot, on such a view, is that Hegel is simply proposing to "eliminate the externality that vitiates Kant's Deduction,"<sup>16</sup> though the simplicity here is clearly deceptive. Again, and in my reading of this, it's not that we're stuck in a human's-eye as opposed to God's-eye point of view. It's not that idealism must therefore embrace a deep sense of skepticism. Rather, it's that thought—*Geist*—is literally all there is. The very thought of something that is not thought is an incoherence. It's something that looks like an idea but is not, in fact, an idea at all.<sup>17</sup>

The upshot turns out to be, for Hegel, enormously liberating. According to Kant, a coherent system of knowledge must be limited to our concepts of empirical experience, that is, our engagement with the physical, material universe; concepts that pertain, say, to the essences of things necessarily produce hopeless contradictions—"antinomies" and "paralogisms"—and therefore violate the criterion of coherence. Hegel saw no clear reason to accept such a limitation. In his account, concepts of a non-empirical nature do often lead to apparent contradictions, but ultimately there is no compelling principle that prevents such contradictions from being resolved. Absolute *Geist*, then, includes not only our ideas about empirical experience but about all of human experience, including our experience of freedom, right and the nature of political society; and again, it rules out any consideration—any intelligible thought about—a world beyond human experience, since any such consideration and any such thought will necessarily and without any possible exception be beyond human experience at all.

As with mathematics, the goal of human reason is to extrapolate from our current stock of accepted premises and propositions the complete and unified set of all such propositions. As with mathematics, the complete set of propositions cannot be evaluated against some external reality; its truth is, so to speak, internal. As with mathematics, that truth must indeed be accepted as *the* truth since, by definition, it alone passes our only test of what it means to make sense, that is, coherence. But even



more, the question of whether or not our truth really is the truth cannot even be raised, since the very idea of the truth is and will always be internal to and undifferentiated from our truth. Of course, it may be highly unlikely that humans will ever attain such a complete and absolute truth. But then, it is also unlikely that mathematics will ever come to a final, complete, satisfying conclusion. This in no way vitiates the importance of mathematics, and it in no way contradicts the notion that the search for a complete and final mathematical theory remains the necessary, intrinsic goal of all mathematical activity. It is the same with *Geist*: Humans are compelled forever to seek absolute truth and complete coherence, even though they suspect that the quest will be eternal.<sup>18</sup>

### 3

All of this pertains largely to *Geist* as the substance of human intellection. But what about *Geist* as process, as a social practice and as an individual human activity? How does *Geist* work?

This is, in fact, a more difficult question than may first appear; for the question of how any social practice operates is, at a certain level, inherently perplexing. Consider, for example, that if we ask exactly how one does mathematics, it is not clear what kind of answer we should provide. It would certainly be very difficult to explain why some individuals are able to come up with mathematical discoveries while others, perhaps equally well trained, are not. There is, one would say, a mysterious and unfathomable element to all thinking, and it seems doubtful that the wondrous discoveries of cognitive science will ever fully dispel that mystery.

What we can do, though, is trace out certain features of the process of discovery at least as it appears from the outside, and to provide something like a post hoc reconstruction of what good thinking amounts to. And with respect to Hegel, we must, of course, note what everyone knows, namely, that from such a perspective the process of thinking is “dialectical.” For Hegel, all correct thinking—either as it occurs in practice or as it is reconstructed—follows a more or less single, recurrent, dialectical pattern. But just as the nature and status of his idealism are often misunderstood, so, too, for the structure of Hegelian dialectics.<sup>19</sup>

We begin with a simple, uncomplicated idea of something: an object, a person, a relationship, an institution. Our idea of the thing is true as far as it goes—it somehow reflects, and cannot but reflect, our actual experience of it—but it also typically fails to tell us the whole truth, since any experience at any particular moment is apt to represent only one among a potential multitude of possible authentic perspectives. Intuiting its inadequacy, we begin to adopt an alternative perspective—we look at the object from a different angle—and to develop thereby an alternative idea of the very same thing, an idea that focuses on elements that were

hitherto ignored or suppressed, hence an idea that is also true as far as it goes but that seems to contradict the first one. This is enormously satisfying—we have discovered a new truth—and deeply troubling at the same time. Given the fact that we now have two different claims that seem to be equally true, we are, as rational creatures, compelled to seek a reconciliation between them such that each is retained as part of a higher truth. This, roughly, is what Hegel refers to as the well-known *Aufhebung*, a German word that means both annulment and preservation. The two original claims about the thing are annulled in that neither can be considered the entire truth of the thing, but they are at the same preserved in that each is an important part of that entire truth, and they are thereby understood as being deeply and utterly dependent on one another in the sense of composing integral and essential parts of what is now discovered to be an organic whole.

Of course, it is by no means clear that mathematics works this way, although at least one book, Imre Lakatos's masterful historical reconstruction of the theory of polyhedra,<sup>20</sup> offers a fascinating, explicitly Hegelian and decidedly dialectical approach to mathematical inference and discovery. In any event, it is clear that Hegel sees the unfolding of *Geist* to proceed necessarily according to some such pattern, and perhaps the most famous example occurs precisely in his philosophy of the political state. There, the initial thesis is the idea of the state as polis: a uniform, relatively undifferentiated, self-sufficient community of virtuous citizens all deeply tied to one another as though they were members of a single, closely knit family. A state is something other than a haphazard or merely useful or purely pragmatic gathering of discrete, unconnected individuals, and this means—and can only mean—that it reflects some kind of more or less robust sense of unity, with all of the constraints and limitations implicit therein. Such a view comes to be challenged by the quite different idea of the modern nation-state, understood as a vast association of otherwise disparate and mutually disinterested individuals who are connected with one another principally by the ties of convenience and practicality. Here, the notion of unity comes to be qualified and even adulterated or undermined by the recognition of individual difference and the celebration of individual agency. The first notion seems to be a true description of the idea of the state insofar as it defines the body politic in terms of duties, obligations, moral responsibilities and mutual dependence. These seem to us endemic to the very concept of political society, as distinguished from, say, anarchy. The second notion seems to be true insofar as it recognizes that each of us, whatever our civic ties and responsibilities happen to be, is also a free, separate, independent agent. In Hegel's political thought, the resolution of this difference ultimately manifests itself in the idea of the rational state—a deeply felt and closely knit community of individuals who are also, at the same time, morally independent and free. Such an idea subsumes the first two,

reestablishing the original notion of community but at a higher level such that the autonomous character of individuals can also be recognized. This is achieved via an analysis of freedom according to which a rational and intelligent creature who obeys rational and intelligent laws and does so because they are rational and intelligent is, for that very reason, free.

The account focuses famously on (inter alia) the political thought of Plato, understood as reflecting the development of *Geist* as it manifested itself in the culture of ancient Greece. From such a vantage point, Plato (PdR 185) was able to “present the substance ethical life in its ideal *beauty* and *truth*,” an ideal that embraces the notion of political society as, above all, a healthy and well-functioning organic whole. But precisely because of his historical situation, Plato was at the same time “unable to come to terms with the principle of self-sufficient particularity”—that is, the “subjective freedom” of the individual qua individual—except by setting it opposition to the state. The project of Hegel’s political thought is, in no small part, to show how this opposition or apparent contradiction is only apparent and that, in fact, it is precisely when the individual citizens understand themselves to be essentially elements in or parts of a complex organic whole that they attain genuine freedom.

In Hegel’s philosophy, *Geist*, as the complete gamut of all possible true propositions, unfolds in this way. At every point, simple truths are juxtaposed to different, seemingly contradictory truths, resulting in a reconciliation and in the establishment of a new, somewhat higher truth that is, in turn, confronted by an alternative truth and so on. The process ends only when all truths are on the table and have been understood and reconciled with one another such that any appearance of contradiction is made to disappear. This, of course, is the fulfillment of Absolute *Geist*—the end of thought, the end of history, the beginning of humankind’s destiny. It must be emphasized in all this that Hegel never denies but, to the exact contrary, embraces and relies on standard notions of rationality and logical entailment. He is sometimes thought to be a champion or defender of contradiction, but this is often misunderstood. The idea of dialectical logic is internal to, not a substitute for, the overriding principle of non-contradiction. Dialectical tensions—apparent contradictions—do indeed *drive* analysis and the self-reflection of mental life, but they are also ultimately *resolved* by the kinds of rational criteria that would be familiar even to the most casual student of Western philosophy. Indeed, Hegel is, arguably, the most rationalistic of all political thinkers.

In Hegelian terms, the dialectic is ultimately a matter of *Geist* becoming apparent to itself. The content of Absolute *Geist* is, in a sense, already present and available, just as the sum total of all true mathematical propositions is already always present and available. It simply has not yet been uncovered, has not yet been made manifest or explicit. And just as the faculty of mathematics is what discovers and makes explicit the content of mathematics, so it is with *Geist*. *Geist* discovers itself, and this

is why Hegel talks not so much of the unfolding of *Geist* over time as of its self-unfolding.

#### 4

With such an account in mind, it becomes possible, I would suggest, to make at least sense of some of the seemingly obscure and peculiar things that Hegel has to say about political society, of a kind mentioned above. Thus, when he argues that the state is nothing other than “thinking itself” and that it has thought both as its form and content, he is reflecting precisely and explicitly the basic principles of his philosophical system according to which all reality, insofar as we recognize and understand it, is constructed on the basis of, hence thoroughly imbued with, the conceptual apparatus that composes the substance of *Geist*—of rational thought—and that becomes ever more explicit as *Geist* emerges historically. In this respect, the state is much like any other institution or organized human practice. It is the expression of an ever-developing structure of rational judgments or truth-claims about how things in the world really are.<sup>21</sup> Hegel’s is a metaphysical theory according to which the state itself is a metaphysical theory—an example, though an especially important one, of thought thinking itself. If the state is distinctive, if, in other words, it is to be understood as different from the other social institutions or practices of which collective human life is composed, it is so primarily because of the special scope of judgments that it comprises, along with the special legal/authoritative status that it confers upon those judgments. It is the institution that embraces and regulates, largely through interpretation, all of the others. As to the “march of God,” then, this surely reflects a deeply secular “theology” according to which the rational substance of mind—the “Idea”—just is “this actual God” (*diesen wirklichen Gott*; PdR 258 Z), and the world as we know it therefore is and can only be neither more nor less than a manifestation and embodiment of universal reason. *Geist* just is the functional equivalent, from the human’s-eye point of view, of what religious modes of thought have described as God.

In the process of reason’s self-unfolding, moreover, it seems that human individuals *qua* citizens of the state play a particular and important role. We are receptacles of, and also vehicles of, *Geist*. *Geist* exists in us; mind is active only and exclusively in our various individual minds. One might say this of mathematics as well. Mathematical truths are true whether or not they’ve been discovered, but they can be discovered only by rational creatures who possess the faculty for doing mathematics. To be a mathematician, then, is to participate in the self-disclosure or self-unfolding of mathematics. Of course, the implication, further, is that the thoughts of the mathematician are not entirely undetermined but are, rather, constrained, limited, and authorized by the final truth of mathematics. So,

too, with *Geist*. For Hegel, to be a human being is above all to be a creature of mind, a mental creature, and the course of our thoughts is channeled, constrained and warranted by the claims and exigencies of *Geist* itself. In our very capacity for free and rational thought, each of us participates necessarily in a larger, cosmic process that is in the deepest sense rational, inexorable and absolute, and that involves, as one of its constitutive elements, the development and maintenance of an organic, well-ordered and internally differentiated polity.

Such a view of humanness will seem attractive neither to those who, like Kant, emphasize the autonomy of the more or less isolated, unconstrained, autonomous personal will nor to those who emphasize the immersion of the individual in communities of nature, feeling, fellowship, as perhaps in the tradition of romanticism. But Hegel's point is precisely to see these two views as dialectical poles and to seek a reconciliation of them that understands our individual existence as both autonomous and dignified and, at the same time, utterly bound up with and embedded in the larger processes of intelligent life. We are free precisely insofar as we are shaped and constrained by the demands of the community in which we find ourselves; indeed, our freedom is nothing other than the embrace of those demands, for in embracing them, we are, at the same time, embracing our own true nature. When, that is, we obey the rules of rationality that are embodied, to the degree possible, in our community, we are, at the same time, obeying ourselves. To propose briefly yet another analogy, freedom, in general, is rather like freedom of speech. Speech is always imprisoned by the rules of language, rules that set more or less rigorous limits on what can be said. But without language—without strict rules of linguistic production—we would have literally nothing to say. One might well wonder if anyone has seen the problem of political freedom quite so clearly and if anyone has suggested a more powerful or compelling solution.

## Notes

- 1 Josiah Royce, *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy: A Critique of the Bases of Conduct and of Faith*. (New York: Harper 1958 [1885]), x–xi.
- 2 I believe that the effort to divorce Hegel's political thought from the basic elements of his system reflects the simple and widespread conclusion—characteristic of much analytic philosophy since Russell—that Hegelian metaphysics is at best wrongheaded, at worst literally nonsense, and, in any case, obsolete. But even as commentators such as Shlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State*. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972); Z. A. Pelczynski, *The State and Civil Society: Studies in Hegel's Political Philosophy*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984) and Allen Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990)—see also, more recently though somewhat more equivocally, Frederick Neuhauser, *Foundations of Hegel's Social Theory: Actualizing Freedom*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000)—chose to describe the Hegelian state as, in effect, “political not metaphysical,” important and influential analytic

- philosophers such as P. F. Strawson, *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics*. (London: Methuen, 1959), Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth and History*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) and John Searle, *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) were rediscovering and rehabilitating the very idea of doing serious metaphysics. And while such authors often gave pride of place to Kant, certain more recent philosophers in a similar tradition—perhaps especially so-called Pittsburgh school theorists such as John McDowell, *Mind and World*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994) and Robert Brandom, *Articulating Reasons: An Introduction to Inferentialism*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000)—have insisted on the very great and ongoing relevance of Hegel himself. For a discussion, see Peter J. Steinberger, *The Idea of the State*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 106–117).
- 3 Happily, much of the literature on PdR now either acknowledges the metaphysical foundations of Hegel's political thought, see Paul Franco, *Hegel's Philosophy of Freedom*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 140; Alan Patten, *Hegel's Idea of Freedom*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 41; or, indeed, actively seeks to trace out the specific ways in which those foundations actually give rise to a theory of the state, see Peter J. Steinberger, *Logic and Politics: Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988); Robert M. Wallace, *Hegel's Philosophy of Reality, Freedom, and God*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Eric Lee Goodfield, *Hegel and the Metaphysical Frontiers of Political Theory*. (London: Routledge, 2014); and Alan Brudner, *The Owl and the Rooster: Hegel's Transformative Political Science*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).
  - 4 This is, of course, Gans's Addition, as derived (in the instant case) from Griesheim's lecture notes. I am part of the consensus in believing Gans to have been an assiduous, deeply informed and highly reliable editor of Hegel's work.
  - 5 The central influence here is Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1958), Par. 198–204, and the standard critical account is still Saul Kripke, *Wittgenstein: On Rules and Private Language*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982). For a characteristic work of political philosophy in this vein, see Richard Flathman, *The Practice of Rights*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).
  - 6 To be sure, mathematics can also generate genuine paradoxes. But a genuine paradox is no less true for being paradoxical.
  - 7 The literature on Kant is, of course, beyond massive. Particularly helpful sources would include Henry Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983); Anthony Savile, *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: An Orientation to the Central Theme*. (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005); and Jill Vance Buroker, *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: An Introduction*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
  - 8 As H. Putnam says, "There Is No God's-Eye Point of View That We Can Know or Usefully Imagine," in *Reason, Truth and History*, 50.
  - 9 W. V. O. Quine, "Identity, Ostension, and Hypostasis," *Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 47, no. 22 (1950): 632.
  - 10 For an influential discussion, see Robert Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfaction of Self-Consciousness*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), for example, at 126–27.
  - 11 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1929), B19–B21; and Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950), 5–6.

- 12 Frederick Beiser, *Hegel*. (London: Routledge, 2005), 157.
- 13 John McCumber, *Understanding Hegel's Mature Critique of Kant*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 55.
- 14 John McDowell, "Hegel's Idealism as a Radicalization of Kant," in *Having the World: Essays on Kant, Hegel and Sellars*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 80. For a discussion, see Brady Brown, *Hegel and the Metaphysics of Absolute Negativity*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 112–15.
- 15 McDowell, "Hegel's Idealism as a Radicalization of Kant," 88.
- 16 McDowell, "Hegel's Idealism as a Radicalization of Kant," 89.
- 17 If there is a shared provenance in recent philosophy for this general way of approaching the question of mind and world, I think it is to be found in Strawson. This seems to be McDowell's view as well, see his "Hegel's Idealism as a Radicalization of Kant," 89n. For an extremely useful introduction, see P. F. Strawson, *Analysis and Metaphysics: An Introduction to Philosophy*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).
- 18 It is at the very least plausible to doubt that Hegel would have taken seriously the prospect actually of achieving Absolute *Geist* in the empirical world, any more than a present-day mathematician—whether or not for Gödel-type reasons—truly believes that the study of mathematics will eventually end, having exhausted all mathematical possibilities. But just as that is, in some non-trivial sense, the guiding and constitutive goal of mathematical inquiry, so, too, for the Hegelian march of *Geist* in time.
- 19 For a strong introduction, see Beiser, *Hegel*, 167–69.
- 20 Imre Lakatos, *Proofs and Refutations: The Logic of Mathematical Discovery*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
- 21 On the notion of institutions as fundamentally constituted by ideas, see W. Richard Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995), whose work is representative of what was then called the "new institutionalism."

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## 2 The Metaphysic of Spirit and Hegel's Philosophy of Politics

*Andrew Buchwalter*

A common assumption in much contemporary Hegel scholarship is that, claims by Hegel to the contrary notwithstanding, his general logical-metaphysical account of spirit (*Geist*) is of limited value for understanding the nature and significance of his political philosophy. This is the view of many of Hegel's contemporary Anglo-American interpreters, who traditionally have been opposed to what they see as the speculative excesses of Hegelian thought generally. But it is also a view common to some thinkers in the continental European tradition. Notable in this regard is Jürgen Habermas. Although Habermas does draw on Hegel's early writings in fashioning his own theory of communicative action, he claims that what might be of continuing value in Hegel's thought is forfeited when it subordinates its account of social life to requirements of a notion of spirit understood in terms of the self-knowing activity of an infinite subject positing its own reality.<sup>1</sup> Habermas's student Axel Honneth argues similarly. Honneth is more sympathetic than Habermas to Hegel's "mature" writings, yet this is only because he locates in those writings an intersubjectively construed account of social reality separable from a "metaphysic of spirit"<sup>2</sup> that for him is now "totally incomprehensible to us."<sup>3</sup>

In what follows I contest this view. My aim is to show that at many levels Hegel's theoretical account of *Geist* remains of great value for understanding his thought and its contemporary value. I do so, however, not by fashioning the concept of spirit in ways that may be more amendable to a non-metaphysical reading—an approach evident, say, in Robert Brandom's characterization of *Geist* in terms of recognitive social relations.<sup>4</sup> Instead, I focus on Hegel's central logical-metaphysical understanding of spirit as the conjunction of substance and subjectivity.<sup>5</sup> I hold that inherent in this idea is a notion of internal self-reflexivity that in numerous respects clarifies the nature, distinctiveness, and vitality of Hegel's political thought.

My discussion has four parts. In part 1, I offer general observations about the concept of *Geist*, focusing on its employment in this paper. Here I highlight core elements in Hegel's concept of spirit: its conjunction of substance and subjectivity, the claim that spirit is a product of itself and its



conception of freedom as self-relating negativity. In part 2, I consider how the concept of *Geist* informs and illuminates Hegel's distinctive account of action. Here I argue, against certain "expressivist" readings, that action for Hegel is best comprehended through the process of internal reflexivity central to the concept of spirit. In part 3, I consider spirit's constitutive value for Hegel's theory of ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*), focusing on the latter both as a community that subsists in attention to the conditions of its communality *and* as itself a condition for the realization of the idea of self-conscious freedom entailed by the concept of spirit. In part 4, I demonstrate—common assumptions again to the contrary notwithstanding—not only that a context-transcending dimension inheres in Hegel's account of political community but that it does so in virtue its reliance on the metaphysic of spirit. Here I focus on four features of his account of political life: the nature and process of its internal reflexivity, its character as historically realized freedom, its interculturality and its futurity.

## 1. The Concept of Spirit

Hegel's concept of *Geist* can be understood in myriad ways. Selfhood, culture, sociality, universal consciousness, humanity's self-comprehension and a supersensible divinity are all notions that have been associated with that concept. In what follows, however, I construe *Geist* as the logical category and structural principle animating his general account of human and social reality. Several components of this category or principle deserve mention. *Geist*, first of all, plays a distinctive role in Hegel's account of a philosophical science. A central task of that science is to provide a rational account of reality. It is "to express the *essentialities* of the *things*."<sup>6</sup> This project is fueled by a process of conceptual reconstruction (*Nachdenken*) in which assumptions and claims about empirical reality are refashioned in properly conceptual form—a process in which, using Hegel's language, things are brought to their concept (*auf den Begriff gebracht*). In the sphere of reality denoted by the concept of *Geist* and, thus, the domain of human experience proper, conceptual reconstruction assumes a special form. At issue is not simply the theoretical reflection on existing reality, an approach appropriate to the comprehension (*Begreifen*) of the natural world. Given human self-reflexivity and the capacity for self-reflection, *Begreifen* in the domain of *Geist* also takes the form of reality's comprehension of itself. Indeed, here the conceptual conjunction of reason and reality instantiates *Geist* itself, defined by Hegel just as the conjunction of substance and subjectivity. Put differently, conceptual reconstruction is here manifest as self-reconstruction, a process of internal reflection in which the object domain subjects itself to inquiry and evaluation. In the sphere of *Geist*, a philosophical account of the essentialities of things consists in depicting an object's internal self-development—"the immanent development of the thing itself."<sup>7</sup>

In Hegel's philosophical science, then, *Geist* is, first of all, a methodological principle detailing how the domain of human reality is to be known and comprehended. At the same time, however, *Geist* is also an ontological principle, articulating the nature of reality itself. In construing the human world as the domain of *Geist*, Hegel asserts that here reality is itself self-relational. The philosophy of spirit comprises entities whose existence is constituted just in their capacity to have themselves as objects of reflection. It is "the nature of mind (*Geist*) to cognize itself."<sup>8</sup> At issue is a substance that is subject to itself and a subjectivity whose reflexivity comprises its very being. Spirit's "self-knowing is a fundamental determination of its *actuality*."<sup>9</sup>

In accentuating the ontological dimension of spirit, Hegel, to be sure, is not referencing a preexisting order of being. Instead, the theory of spirit is an ontology only in the sense that spirit's reality is a function of its own activity. To say that spirit consists in the reflexive conjunction of substance and subjectivity means that it acquires its proper existence only in the process through which that conjunction is forged and established—the process of substance subjecting itself to reflection. Spirit indeed is a product, and indeed the product of itself; it is that which gives itself its own reality.

Hegel describes spirit further as the process of its own self-development. But this is not to say that the self in question already exists or even that self-development takes the form of an actualization of a self that initially subsists only implicitly or partially. Instead, Hegel's contention is that the self is itself first constituted only in its self-development. Proceeding from a notion of spirit conceived as the subjective rendering of substantiality, selfhood is the product of internal reflexivity itself. The self is that which is "brought into being by its own activity" (Enc3 §382Zu).

In this regard spirit is best understood not as a thing at all but as its own developmental *process*. Hegel defines spirit as a phenomenon of self-becoming, as the becoming of what it is. It is self-becoming, however, not in the sense not of actualizing a specific entity but as the process through which selfhood is established in the first place. Spirit *is* the process of its own self-manifestation (Enc3 §§ 378Zu., 383Zu). Spirit does indeed produce itself yet in the sense that the very activity of self-production is its reality. The nature of self-knowing mind is that "the product is the same as that which produces itself" (Enc3 §382Zu). In the words of Dieter Henrich, "[t]he subject for Hegel is . . . nothing but the active relationship to itself. In the subject there is nothing underlying its self-reference, there is only self-reference."<sup>10</sup>

Hegel's position can be further clarified by considering the relationship of the concept of spirit to freedom, which he identifies as its essential quality (Enc3 §382). This identification has multiple connotations. Spirit gives voice to a notion of philosophy committed to the autonomy or self-determination of reason and, in particular, the idea that reason

cannot be subject to any outside or presupposed assumptions in its effort to account for its own rationality. It also articulates the idea of freedom itself, for which it is not enough simply to be free but to know oneself as free as well (Enc3 §385Zu). In addition, however, the identification of spirit with freedom is a feature of the account of reality itself, according to which what exists does so only as a product of its own creation. The internal reflexivity of spirit connotes that “[f]ree act of thinking . . . by which it gives itself and produces its object” (Enc1 §1). Moreover, to say the essence of spirit is freedom is also to say that spirit, in creating itself, creates its own freedom: “It is as the creator of its freedom that we have to consider mind in philosophy” (Enc3 §382Zu). What counts as spirit’s freedom is not derived from a given definition or rooted in a given property but exists again only through its own activity.

None of this is to say that spirit produces itself *ex nihilo*. This is a view often attributed to Hegel, yet it does an injustice to the idea of spirit itself. As the process and reality of substance becoming subject to itself, spirit is never fully self-generating; it subsists only in engaging a given reality. Yet to acknowledge thus the substantiality of spirit is not to deny its autonomous character. It only affirms it. As the conjunction of substance and subjectivity, spirit gives expression to yet another feature of Hegel’s view of freedom, viz., selfhood in otherness or *Bei-sich-selbst-sein* (PR §7A). In this view, the creativity of spirit is not that it generates reality *ex nihilo* but that it constitutes itself only in properly and knowingly expressing itself in what is other than itself. It is in this conscious appropriation of the received conditions of its being that it conjoins substance and subjectivity, and it is through this forged unity that spirit makes and creates itself.

A similar point can be made with the concept of negativity, also addressed by Hegel in his consideration of spirit’s freedom. If spirit does not create *ex nihilo*, its creativity is still construed as a mode of negativity. This is central to his characterization of spirit as “self-relating negativity” (PR §7, amended; SL 621). Spirit establishes itself as such in just the process by which it negates heteronomously given attributes, fashions those attributes its own, and in so doing properly constitutes itself. It is in this transformative appropriation of what is immediately given that it establishes its true being—i.e., the subjective rendering of its substantiality. In this regard, Hegel invokes the principle of “absolute negativity” (Enc3 §382) to account for spirit’s creativity. Spirit is a process of transformative liberation, one that purges its own heteronomous attributes, locates itself in what is reflectively alien and, in so doing, forges an identity ontologically engendered by that very adequation of substance and subjectivity (Enc3 §382Zu).

None of this is to deny that even when emphasizing its robustly self-determining character Hegel still proceeds from a stipulated definition of spirit. Underlying the freedom of spirit indeed the principle of

self-relationality. As the conjunction of substance and subjectivity, spirit is “the relating of itself to itself” (Enc3 §382Zu, amended).<sup>11</sup> But this is not to say that Hegel is committed to a substratal account of spirit after all. On the contrary, here, too, spirit remains the product of itself. Even if one might presuppose a given notion of self-relation, spirit itself—understood also as the rendering “for itself” of what is initially “in itself”—is realized only when that self-relationality is itself made an object of reflection. The process is itself a product of its own activity. This, too, is a form of spirit as self-relating negativity.

Granted, this view does entail a certain circularity, one in which a subject's reflection on its own self-relationality itself presupposes the activity of self-relational reflexivity. But this is a problem only if the account of spirit is expected to entail a final and definitive product of self-relation, and this is something denied by the concept of spirit itself. To say that spirit is self-relational is to acknowledge its character as an ongoing activity, an entity ever subjecting itself to further reflection. Spirit is indeed the “distinguishing itself from itself” (Enc3 §378Zu). Thus, against any endorsement of a presupposed quality, spirit in its self-relationality entails an account of reality that is open-ended and fueled through a continual process of “self-transformation” (Enc3 §379Zu). Hegel described *Weltgeist* as the “unending struggle with itself,”<sup>12</sup> but this is only a more specific formulation of a notion of spirit itself understood as “absolutely restless being, pure activity” (Enc3 §378Zu).

## 2. Action Theory

Many of the features of Hegel's general theory of spirit are reaffirmed in his conception of action, which is detailed above all in the morality section of the *Philosophy of Right*. In recent years significant attention has been accorded this conception.<sup>13</sup> Especially prominent is the reading advanced by Robert Pippin, also a proponent of a non-metaphysical approach to Hegel's thought. Building on the work of Charles Taylor,<sup>14</sup> Pippin, notably in *Hegel's Practical Philosophy*, advances an *expressivist* reading of Hegel's theory.<sup>15</sup> In what follows I take issue with this view.<sup>16</sup> While not disputing the role that expression does play in Hegel's theory of action, I maintain that Hegel's position is more adequately construed through the related principle of inwardization (*Innerlichkeit*) and its cognate concepts of interiorization and internal reflexivity. Appreciation of the role played by the principle of inwardization—“the distinguishing feature of the modern world”<sup>17</sup>—in Hegel's account of action not only facilitates understanding of that account; it also reaffirms and further demonstrates the role played by the metaphysic of *Geist* in shaping his practical philosophy.

For Pippin, Hegel's theory of action represents an account of human purpose and intention. In his view, intentions do not denote discrete ex

ante mental states, nor is action itself the phenomenon of inner states exerting a causal effect on an external entity. Instead, action denotes a process through which agents shape and discover their intentions and themselves through engagement in and with the world. For Pip-pin, this expressivist reading finds its most distinctive articulation in Hegel's account of a "social theory of agency,"<sup>18</sup> as the processes of self-understanding and self-discovery are best clarified with reference to the public norms and societal forms of recognition that give meaning and reality to subjective agency.

As a general matter, much is correct in this analysis. Although Hegel does construe action with reference to subjective intentions and purposes, he rejects any merely introspective account of mental life. He does hold that any account of inner experience cannot be demarcated from external embodiment but depends on the latter for its meaning and reality. And he does contend that the external conditions of agency are intertwined with robust notions of social and communal life.

None of this, however, warrants the conclusion that Hegel advocates a specifically expressivist conception of action. To assume otherwise is to disregard the degree to which the theory of action is a subspecies of Hegel's broader conception of *Geist* and its principle of internal reflexivity. While considerations of embodiment, objectification, and externalization certainly do comprise elements of the Hegelian account of agency, they are themselves components of a more basic process of inwardization meant to liberate subjectivity from external determination, and in ways that enrich, consolidate, and actualize its claims to autonomy. As the "expression of will as subjective or moral" (PR §113), action does represent a process by which the will locates itself in a world adequate to its own autonomy, yet the expectation of adequation itself dictates that agency assume the form of an interiorization process wherein what the subject initially confronts as externally conditioned expressions of itself is progressively rearticulated as the explicit and self-conscious posits of itself. The point is central to Hegel's account of morality, as it is only in such subjective reappropriation that the good—the specific desideratum of a notion of agency understood "as moral"—attains objective reality. But it is also basic to the account of selfhood realized through action. In this view, autonomous selfhood is properly attainable not just in the objective of embodiment of the will in the world but in the consciousness and knowledge of the will *as* embodied. It is in the process of internal reflection that the self acquires objective reality. What Hegel writes of the concept of will pertains as well to the account of action with which it is identified: its "existence or objective externality is inwardness itself" (*das Innerliche selbst*; PR §22).

A full account of the subject-object dialectic fueling Hegel's developmental understanding of subjective autonomy would require consideration of the multiple steps in his notoriously complex discussion of agency

in the morality chapter.<sup>19</sup> Such consideration is not possible here. Instead, I limit myself to a brief recapitulation of the final and culminating moment in his account of morality: conscience (*Gewissen*). Conscience is important because it represents the highest expression of morality itself, combining a deontological conception of objective good with the subjective disposition to will the good. But it is also important as the highest expression of a form of action dedicated to actualizing the realized good. Conscience is “the power to bring the good to reality through action.”<sup>20</sup> In conscience, the activity of subjective self-determination is itself the realization of the good. The conscientious individual is one who apprehends him- or herself as a conscientious agent, and such self-apprehension—conscientiousness itself—is the worldly realization of what is right and good. Conscience is the “infinite and inwardly knowing [*wissende*] subjectivity which determines its content within itself” (PR §128). For the person of conscience—one “knows and does what is concretely right”—the deed is fully informed by the intent, and this interpenetration of subject and object is “action itself” (PS 386).

Appreciation of the nature of conscience makes clear the centrality of interiorization for Hegel's view of action. It is with conscience—“the total withdrawal into the self” (PR §136A)—that Hegel fashions the mediation of moral self-determination and norms of right and good comprising action in its consummate form. Conscience thus affirms the point of agency itself: “[W]hat someone does must be considered not in its immediacy, but only as mediated through his inwardness and as a manifestation of it” (Enc1 §112A). It also reaffirms the role of a metaphysic of spirit in Hegel's account of practical philosophy, for which “[e]verything which arises in the ethical realm (*Sittlichkeit*) is produced (*hervorgebracht*) by this activity of spirit” (PR §138A). Together with the general conception of agency, conscience gives quintessential expression to an ontology rooted in the notion of substance becoming subject for itself: “[I]tself its own end” (*in ihm selbst Selbstzweck*; Enc3 §503; PR §137), conscience instantiates “the *concept* of spirit . . . , [which] has its *reality* in spirit” (Enc3 §553, translation amended).

Hegel, to be sure, is also highly critical of the phenomenon of conscience as presented in the chapter on morality. So long as it is construed from the standpoint of the individual moral subject, conscience can assume a host of forms inimical to a realized notion of the good, including vanity, hypocrisy, and evil itself. To avoid such expressions, conscience must be restated in terms of objective conceptions of value, those deriving not from the will of the individual subject but from the communally accepted norms and principles connoted by ethical life, the final section in the *Philosophy of Right*. This is the basis for his championing of “genuine” or “true conscience” over the merely “formal” approach advanced in the section on morality (PR §137A). In espousing an expressivist reading of Hegel's conception of agency, Pippin emphasizes just this point, calling

attention to Hegel's claim that action is "the translation of its individual content into the objective element, in which it is universal and recognized, and it is just the fact that it is recognized that makes the deed a reality" (PS 388).

Yet the acknowledgment of the dependency of conscientious agency on institutional norms and public forms of recognition is not to say that Hegel's notion of action is an expressivist one after all. Here, too, inwardness and interiorization remain central to Hegel's account. While agency does depend on publicly recognized norms of conduct, these norms have meaning for agents only insofar as they can acknowledge their application to the conditions of their lives. The domain of publicly shared norms, qua norms of "public freedom," attains full reality only in "the self-awareness (*Selbstgefühl*) of individuals" (PR §265 & A).

In asserting that public norms do depend for their validity and proper reality on the reflective awareness of individuals, Hegel, again, is not appealing to an originary or preexisting account of self. On Hegel's intersubjective view, any sense of selfhood only exists in and through social relations. It is still the case, however, that a proper account of ethicality itself depends on its reflective endorsement by the individuals composing it. Nor is such endorsement restricted merely to an acknowledgment of the self's dependency on community membership. The specific reflexivity of such endorsement includes affirmation of the conditions of community itself. It is especially with regard to such affirmation, itself an affirmation of a mediated relationship of self and other, that the dependence of ethicality on the self-awareness of individuals is particularly clear. If ethicality relates the individual to the general interest that shapes it, it itself presupposes that individuals "knowingly and willingly recognize this universal interest as their own substantial spirit, and actively pursue it as their ultimate end" (PR §260).

Underlying this point is Hegel's conception of individual autonomy. Central to his intersubjective account is the view that the self and self-identity are shaped through social relations. There is no self-awareness independently of such sociality. Yet far from derogating subjective autonomy, such dependency only affirms it. Proceeding from a notion of identity as the identity of identity and difference, subjectivity is properly affirmed only as it determines itself in what is other than itself (PR §23). Subjectivity is thus for Hegel a highly differentiated and mediated concept. Not only does a genuine sense of self include reference to what is other than itself, but the very identity of the self also consists in an acknowledgment and perception of itself as a relationship of self and other (PR §112). Here, too, the appreciation of external dependence gives expression to a notion of subjectivity forged in processes of internal reflexivity.

The point is also central to Hegel's conception of action. Consummated in conscientious agency, action theory for Hegel is articulated most fully in relations of ethicality, and specifically in structures of mutual recognition.<sup>21</sup> Yet such structures are entwined with a robust account



of subjectivity. Not only do recognitive relations give rise *a limine* to a proper account of the subject, one that integrates into its own self-understanding its relation to the others; those relations are themselves rooted in modes of subjective self-consciousness. Thus, not only do such relations depend on individuals recognizing their dependence on others, but the modes of recognitive relationality—those constitutive of *Sittlichkeit* itself—themselves also depend on individuals consciously affirming such relations. Recognitive relationality is, in short, constituted in the relational self-consciousness of relationally connected individuals. Here, too, action theory, in realizing the good in the world, is intertwined with developed and developing modes of internal reflection and reflexivity. True conscience may give rise to a notion of ethical action (*sittliche Handlung*),<sup>22</sup> but that, in turn, is shaped in and through modes of ethical disposition (*sittliche Gesinnung*; PR §§261–5).

In sum, action as realized in ethical life instantiates core elements of the concept of spirit. Five such elements can be noted, all interrelated. First, as manifest in ethical life action forges connections between self and other and, in so doing, instantiates the general principle of the identity of identity and difference informing a notion of spirit itself sustained in the mediation of substance and subjectivity. Second, action affirms the principle of self-consciousness central to the idea of “self-knowing spirit.” Ethical action is intertwined with the cultivated and expanded self-consciousness that is both the consequence of and the condition for the modes of reciprocity to which such action is directed. Third, realized action affirms the internal reflexivity of a notion of spirit constituted through such reflexivity. Ethical life as actualized through action assumes reality through modes of ethical disposition subsisting in attention to the conditions of ethicality itself. Fourth, action theory affirms the view, central to the idea of spirit and the notion that “self-knowing is a fundamental determination of its *actuality*” (SL 37), that what exists properly does so only in the process of substance becoming subject to itself. As with spirit, ethicality realized through action *is* the disposition on the part of members of an ethical community to ethicality itself and the conditions of their reciprocal relationality. Fifth, ethical action instantiates the concept of activity (*Tätigkeit*) central to the idea of spirit itself. In the same way that the activity of spirit denotes a process in which “the product is one and the same as that which produces it” (Enc3 §§378Zu and 379), so the nature of the “self-determining action” (PR §258) specific to ethical sentiment is such that the ethicality the latter engenders is nothing but the activity of members of an ethical community attending to the conditions of their ethical commonality.

### 3. Ethical Life

In the preceding section, Hegel was shown to advance a conception of action that culminates in an account of ethical sentiment or disposition



that serves as an ontological condition for possibility of ethical life itself. In presenting this account I have sought to elucidate the manner in which the notion of spirit, and, in particular, its informing principles of inwardization and internal reflectivity, are central to Hegel's conception of action. But I have also sought to indicate the centrality of self-reflexive spirit for the idea of ethicality itself. Not only does ethical life depend on its reflective endorsement by the individuals it comprises; it is also itself just the cognitive and volitional activity of community members attending to the conditions of their communality.

It might be claimed, however, that such appeal to the concept of spirit does a disservice to Hegel's conception of ethical life. A basic feature of that conception is its attention to norms and practices embedded in concrete sociohistorically life practices. This feature, of course, reflects a central way in which Hegel is assumed to contrapose ethical life to Kantian morality and its principle of unconditioned agential autonomy. Yet if Hegel's notion of ethical life is thus distinguished from Kantian morality, it would seem to be even more removed from an affiliation with his metaphysic of spirit, whose self-generated ontology gives voice to notion of unconditioned self-determination arguably more robust than Kant's. This point has recently been pressed by Axel Honneth, who has claimed that Hegel's *Sittlichkeit* is properly comprehended only when freed from "the ontological presupposition of a universally self-realizing spirit."<sup>23</sup> If Hegel's account of *Sittlichkeit* is interpretable through a conception of spirit, it is only the historically embodied conception connoted by the idea of *objective* spirit. But that conception, committed to discerning norms of social rationality in historically existent practices and institutions, is distinct from the self-positing account of reason and reality central to the speculative conception of spirit.

Here is not the place to consider in any detail Hegel's idea of objective spirit. Instead, it is enough to note the historicized embodiment associated with the idea of objective spirit is not only compatible with but entailed by his metaphysic of spirit. *Geist* is understood generally as the principle of the identity of identity and difference and more specifically as a principle of freedom construed as selfhood in otherness. What this means is that spirit cannot be construed as a self-contained principle or activity juxtaposed to empirical circumstances. Instead, obtaining expression in external reality is a condition for its identity and autonomy. Spirit establishes that identity and autonomy only through manifesting itself in that which is alien to itself. Indeed, the very autonomy of spirit would be undermined if bound and delimited by circumstances outside itself. Spirit is properly self-determining only as it expresses itself in conditions of external determination (see PR §§5–7).

Hegel's point, however, is not simply that spirit realizes itself via its expression in external reality. He maintains as well that its objective embodiment is properly achieved only if external reality itself gives

expression to spirit. Only this does justice to spirit's embodiment in what is alien to itself. The realization of spirit in reality depends on the inspiration or spiritual rendering of reality itself. This means first that spirit can find expression in externality only if external reality assumes a form hospitable to such embodiment. In particular, spirit realizes itself in reality only as reality can be said to generate structures and arrangements themselves expressive of freedom. In this view, such generation is implicitly achieved in modern commercial society and, in particular, civil society (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*), itself one component of the *Philosophy of Right's* doctrine of ethical life. Characterized as "a system of all-round interdependence" (PR §183), civil society fosters an account of social arrangements that, in principle, instantiates the mediation of individual and community entailed by a notion of freedom understood as selfhood and otherness central to the account of ethicality. And inasmuch as historical reality in this way contributes to the worldly realization of freedom, it also facilitates actualization of a logico-metaphysical notion of spirit whose very identity depends on its external embodiment.

Hegel, to be sure, denies that civil society represents a proper account of realized freedom or ethicality. If the notion of realized freedom is germinally achieved in the systemic interdependencies of modern market societies, such interdependencies remain the "unconscious" by-product of individuals pursuing wealth-maximizing private interests. They are not the product of conscious volition on the part of social members. And absent such conscious volition, a social order so conceived—here Hegel distinguishes himself from political economists who presume the societally beneficial results of individuals pursuing private wealth-maximizing strategies—ineluctably gives rise to a host of pathologies (conspicuous consumption, alienating working conditions and systemic poverty) that undermines the possibility for a genuine system of social interdependence. Civil society may give the appearance (*Schein*) of ethicality (PR §189). In reality, however, it represents "the loss of ethical life" (*der Verlust der Sittlichkeit*) itself (PR §181).

A proper realization of freedom then requires a shift to the form of social relations provided by a polity or political community generally—the state, in Hegel's terminology. What characterizes such community is precisely that social interdependence is now itself construed as an explicit object of the conscious and volitional agency of social members. In a genuine polity, Hegel contends, individuals know that their identity is properly achieved only in establishing and maintaining relations with others. In addition, community itself subsists precisely in its members' cognitive and volitional attention to the conditions of their own commonality.<sup>24</sup>

Appreciation of Hegel's account of the relationship of civil society and state bears significantly on the doctrine of politics' relationship to the metaphysic of spirit. From what has been said, it is clear that political community gives expression to a notion of spirit predicated on the

centrality of mutual recognition for individual identity formation. Similarly, in the notion of a community that subsists in the attention of community members to the conditions of their commonality, a polity gives expression to the ontological self-reflexivity of spirit. But Hegel's concept of political community also articulates the idea of spirit as realized freedom. To accommodate this idea, it is not enough simply to note existent social *structures* that may express the idea of realized of freedom as *bei sich selbst sein*. His stronger claim is that freedom is properly realized in reality only if and when individuals composing social reality not only know themselves free but also actively contribute to the realization of freedom. Realized freedom cannot simply be a state of affairs evident to third-person theorizing; if it is not to be constrained by external considerations, it must be realized as well from the first-person perspectives of affected individuals. In current terminology, the addressees of freedom must also be understood as its authors.

Regarding the relationship of Hegel's metaphysic of spirit and the doctrine of politics, then, two comments are in order. First, as a realization of freedom, a genuine polity—qua intersubjectively structured self-conscious community—instantiates of a notion of spirit understood as the conjunction of substance and subject and committed to a notion of the identity of identity and difference. Second, a genuine polity represents a condition for the realization of spirit itself. As realized freedom, spirit depends on its external embodiment, yet the latter is properly achieved only to the degree that social reality establishes its own autonomy. The special relation between politics and a metaphysics of spirit for Hegel lies in the circumstance that a polity both expresses and enacts the idea of spirit, a state of affairs itself reflecting a notion of spirit understood as both the cause and the consequence of itself.

Honneth is thus correct in asserting that Hegel provides a historically embodied and socially situated account of ethical life. Yet it is incorrect to claim that such an account is properly articulated only when demarcated from Hegel's ontology of spirit. Instead, the two objectives go hand in hand. The metaphysical account of spirit demands and requires an account of historically realized ethical life. Conversely historically realized ethical life is itself properly achieved only as it expresses the principle of internal reflexivity informing the metaphysic of spirit. Hegel famously subtitled his *Philosophy of Right* as at once "Rational Natural Law and Positive Political Science." In doing so he sought to stress both that a general account of right cannot be properly achieved without its embodiment in the concrete life of a particular community *and* that such embodiment must itself conform to and enact norms articulated by an account of rational natural law and, in particular, the idea of the free will, itself understood as "the free will that wills the free will" (PR §27). In like manner it might be said that Hegel's conception of ethical life proffers a simultaneously metaphysical and historically existent account of realized

spirit, one in which the two accounts are reciprocally dependent and mutually implicative.

In a recent text Honneth does advance a more nuanced position on the relationship of Hegel's logical theory of spirit and his conception of ethical life. In "Of the Poverty of Our Liberty: The Greatness and Limits of Hegel's Doctrine of Ethical Life," he asserts that Hegel's *Realphilosophie* is fueled by "two-sided analysis" marked by an account of the "logical determinations of spirit," on one hand, and a "phenomenological or empirical" effort to depict the realization of freedom in "objective social reality," on the other. In this reading Hegel's logical account of spirit and the latter's "self-referring subjectivity" is employed as a tool to explain and comprehend the historically achieved realization of reason and freedom in modern society. For Honneth, "[t]his twofold conceptual apparatus remains one of the most attractive features of Hegel's project."<sup>25</sup>

Honneth's effort in this work is distinctive as he now assigns a positive value to Hegel's logical account of spirit. He also does well to acknowledge the dyadic nature—formal-ontological and descriptive-diagnostic—of Hegel's *Realphilosophie*. Still, it is not clear that this new reading does full justice to Hegel's particular position. While Honneth is correct to note these two elements in Hegel's philosophical approach to reality, he arguably fails to appreciate the uniquely dialectical manner in which Hegel conjoins them. At issue are not simply two ways of examining reality but instead a more comprehensive approach in which the two sides reciprocally presuppose and entail one another. Rather than a "twofold conceptual apparatus," reference instead may be made to a single apparatus with two interlocking and mutually sustaining components. The point flows again from Hegel's identification of spirit with freedom understood as *Bei sich selbst sein*. On one hand, a logical, "formal-ontological" account of freedom is a *limine* realized in what is indeed alien to itself—the practical activity in which historical agents establish their own freedom in space and time. Conversely, a "phenomenological or empirical" account of the historical realization of freedom is properly actualized only when it can be said to instantiate and embody the structure of internal self-reflexivity central to the autonomy of spirit—that is, only when it takes the form of a community that makes its own commonality an object of cognition and volition. In Hegel's dialectical understanding of the relationship of logic and history, the logical-metaphysical account of spirit is properly realized in the historical agency of individuals and groups, just as the "descriptive grasp" of such agency goes hand in hand with a normative evaluation of such agency in terms of its capacity to express and enact the principle of self-related and self-relating subjectivity central to the logical account of spirit. Far from demarcating a phenomenological-empirical account of realized spirit from a logical-metaphysical one, Hegel maintains, again, that the two approaches are intertwined and interdependent.<sup>26</sup>

#### 4. Openness and Transgression

One can, to be sure, criticize the monistic view of the relationship of logico-metaphysical and empirical-descriptive considerations outlined here for its possible conservatism and its seeming tendency to provide metaphysical validation to existing social realities. This is famously the view of Karl Marx. Its elements are also found in Honneth. Referring to the determination to construe existing institutions as the very embodiment of “self-comprehending spirit,” Honneth faults Hegel for a failure to do justice to “a dynamic of openness and transgression”—identifiable with the account of subjective freedom—“that could call into question the very constitution of ethical institutions.”<sup>27</sup>

It is indisputable that elements are present in Hegel’s thought that not only confer normative legitimacy on existing social arrangements but preclude receptivity to other cultural-political formations, social change and future developments. At the same time, however, it is also incorrect that assert that an apotheosis of the present and closure vis-à-vis other social arrangements are necessarily entailed by Hegel’s metaphysics of spirit. On the contrary, in employing logic of spirit to fashion an account of social life, he also affirms a criticality with regard to existing institutions and an openness, both spatial and temporal, to other cultural-political contexts and circumstances. This point is demonstrable by briefly considering four features of his account of political life: its internal reflexivity, its character as historically realized freedom, its interculturality and its futurity.

##### *Internal Reflexivity*

The first concerns the nature of ethical life itself. Hegel construes ethical life as the embodiment and actualization of a notion of objective spirit understood in part as a shared political culture of freedom. Yet what characterizes this political culture not, say, a shared consensus on a set of substantive values or norms. As with other modern political theorists, Hegel deems demands for such consensus as anathema to modern pluralism and to what he calls the right of subjective freedom. To the extent that Hegel does acknowledge such commonality, it is rather as regards a process of self-reflexivity by a community characterized cognitively and volitionally by the attention to its commonality. This is the commonality mandated by a notion of ethical life understood as the realization of a concept of spirit conceived as the process of substance rendering itself as subject. And it is this account of ethical life as an ongoing reflective process that also debars a notion of social-political closure. Appreciation of this ongoing reflectivity makes clear that an account of ethical life as the embodiment of self-comprehending reason is able to underwrite an openness to revised forms of a community’s political self-understanding.

To suggest that an openness and revisability does inhere in Hegel's account of ethical life is not also to suggest that he does not espouse a robust concept of collective identity. Such identity is indeed entailed by a notion of community defined precisely in terms of its consciousness of itself. Acknowledging this, however, is not to posit anything fixed or essentialist about such identity, nor does it denote a concept of self derived from an already-existing account of identity. On the model of a notion of spirit whose reality is constituted only in the subjective rendering of substantiality, any sense of self-identity is, again, one that subsists only processes of a community reflecting on its commonality. In addition, what results from such processes is first and foremost not a specific object or content but, rather, the very activity of a community attending to the conditions of its commonality. Consonant again with the idea of spirit, such identity takes the forms of an "indwelling self-consciousness" (Enc3 §552), a reality constituted just in its internal reflexivity. Furthermore, the sense of identity—the collective self-awareness (*Selbstgefühl*)—associated with this shared consciousness is historically delimited and thus shaped by a historicity of its own. This last point, which denotes a second sense in which a context-transcending dimension inheres in Hegel's account of community, can be illuminated by considering his understanding of social-political life as an articulation of the historically realized spirit associated with the idea of objective spirit.

### *Historically Realized Freedom*

As noted, freedom for Hegel is understood as selfhood in otherness, itself a feature of a notion of Spirit understood as the conjunction of substance and subjectivity. In the domain of objective spirit such freedom is realized as individuals, singly and in concert, recognize themselves in the sociohistorical conditions of their existence. It is the nature of those conditions, however, that they undergo regular change. This means that individuals, in affirming and maintaining their freedom, must regularly reestablish their identity and sense of self-awareness in the external conditions of their lives. What Hegel says of a constitution obtains as well for the sense of collective identity so shaped by a constitution—it must be regularly "rejuvenated" (*verjüngert*).<sup>28</sup> In this view, then, a revisability attaches to the notion of political self-identity specific to this domain. This is so not only in the sense that such identity undergoes revisions but that the awareness of revisability is itself a feature of notion of identity that, in the model of spirit, understands itself as the self-consciousness of the subjective rendering of substantiality.<sup>29</sup> It is true, then, that Hegel's logical account of spirit entails embodiment of self-comprehending rationality in historically existing institutions. Yet for Hegel the historicity of that embodiment, far from furnishing a conceptual validation of existing

arrangements, mandates ongoing societal processes of renewal and self-renewal while empowering forms of political identity shaped by and supported of such processes.

### *Interculturality*

Yet another way in which one may speak of the openness and transformational nature of forms of political community shaped by the self-comprehending logic of spirit pertains to a self-transcending reference to other cultures and communities. For many it is precisely such reference that is precluded by a notion of self-comprehending spirit. This is the position *inter alia* of Jürgen Habermas, who claims that Hegel's reliance on the logic of spirit entails an autarchic, self-generating and self-objectifying subjectivity solipsistically encased in its own reality.<sup>30</sup> For Habermas, the notion of spirit understood as the unity of substance and subjectivity is *pro tanto* monologically structured and thus antithetical to any account of intersubjective sociality. It may be that in his youthful writings, focused on the civic religion of the ancient Greek polis and the early Christian communities, Hegel espoused a robustly intersubjective approach to social life. But he jettisoned this with his later move to a conception of spirit modeled on the idea of an absolute subjectivity that becomes for itself what it is already in itself.<sup>31</sup>

Here is not the place to consider the evolution of Hegel's thought. It is enough to note that Hegel's "philosophy of the subject" is also an intersubjective philosophy, and indeed because of its imbrication with the logical-metaphysical conception of spirit. Consistent with a notion of *Geist* sustained in the mediation of opposites and animated by a notion of freedom as selfhood in otherness, Hegel's conception of subjectivity is an intersubjective notion as well. This point is most demonstrably articulated in his account of reciprocal recognition, which proceeds as an immanent critique of monological notions of subjectivity. Not only does Hegel here show that the claims of subjective identity repose on robust accounts of intersubjective relations; not only does he assert that subjective identity depends on integrating into its own self-understanding the other's perception of it; he maintains further that intersubjective sociality itself depends on and is sustained by individual subjects' consciousness of and commitment both to the other and to the conditions of sociality generally. All are features of Hegel's celebrated claim in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*: "*Self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness*" (PS 110).

Hegel argues similarly with regard to cultural-political communities, which he understands as articulated in a principle of collective identity—or *Volksgeist*—expressive of the principle of self-consciousness. To acknowledge this feature of political communities is to acknowledge as well that their identity is intertwined with relations to other communities. As with



individual identity, here, too, a community is established as such only with reference to other communities. It is in “the relationship of nations to other nations” that a group of people is able “to perceive itself . . . and to have itself as an object” (*sein Verhältnis zu andern Nationen . . . [und] sein Wesen vor sich zu haben*).<sup>32</sup> Nor is Hegel suggesting that a sovereign nation makes such external reference simply in order to enhance an existing and already established conception of identity. He asserts instead that that identity itself is properly first constituted only when a subject integrates the other’s perspective into its own self-apprehension. In line with the theory of reciprocal recognition that informs his account of interpersonal relations, he claims that one community can acquire an expansive perspective on its own self-perception only if it both takes into account how it is perceived by the other and incorporates that perception into its own sense of identity. One nation is “completed” (*vervollständigt*) in its recognition of and by the other (PR §331A, amended).

Hegel, to be sure, does not thereby jettison the notion of nation-state sovereignty. More so than Kant, whose vision of political cosmopolitanism he rejects, Hegel remains focused on the primacy of bounded communities and their sovereign autonomy. On his view, however, such communities are not monadically self-contained entities exclusionarily juxtaposed to other such communities. Instead, “sovereign” identity itself is a context-transcending concept, one in which identity is fully forged only in relations with other such communities. For Hegel, sovereign states are self-conscious communities, autonomous in the consciousness of their self-sufficiency, and thus “depend[ent] on the perception and will of the other” (*beruht auf der Ansicht und dem Willen des anderen*; PR §331).

Here is not the place to consider Hegel’s general theory of international law and cross-cultural relations.<sup>33</sup> Instead, it is enough to note that even though Hegel does comprehend political communities with the tools of a philosophy of subjectivity rooted in a metaphysic of spirit, that does not entail a narrowly monadic account that precludes intersubjectively structured or interculturally forged relations among communities. His position instead gives voice to an account of such relations and, indeed, not in spite of but because of his logical account of spirit.

### *Futurity*

Let us consider, finally, a fourth way to speak of the openness and transformational nature of forms of a political community shaped by the self-comprehending logic of spirit. This concerns the act of the self-reflection associated with the self-comprehension informing modes of collective identity. For Hegel, no such act of self-reflection is ever complete; no such act can ever grasp fully its own act of comprehension. Instead, an incompleteness always attaches to such activity, one reflected in an



opposition between the subject and object of self-comprehension—the self-comprehending community as an object of self-reflection and the subjective reflection on that objectivity. Yet such oppositions do not bespeak an inadequacy or impotence of spirit. Instead, they attest precisely to the openness and futurity implicit in any realized form of collective identity. The forms of incompleteness in question serve to trigger the emergence of new and more variegated levels of cultural life, those that more effectively narrow the gap between the reality and self-reflexivity bequeathed by its predecessor: “Through knowledge spirit makes manifest a distinction between knowledge and that which is; this knowledge is thus what produces a new form of development.”<sup>34</sup>

Hegel’s point, to be sure, is not that an existing culture itself enacts and effectuates transition to a new stage of development. At issue is not a wholly immanent process of critique and self-transformation. In this respect Hegel would likely not accept the view of Rahel Jaeggi, who, appealing to the concept of experience detailed in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, adumbrates the notion of a “transformative dynamic” understood as a “historical process of problem-solving.”<sup>35</sup> There are at least a couple problems with this approach, at least from a Hegelian perspective. For one thing, it is at odds with the general historicity of thought and culture, including the restriction imposed on the latter with regard to its ability to transcend its age. For another, it is at odds with Hegel’s very idea of historical change. Although he does see change as a process of cultural self-reflection, it is one properly effectuated and achieved only in the reflective activity of a subsequent form of life. It is “a later form of Geist . . . that . . . knows what a previous one is.”<sup>36</sup> Only a subsequent form of life can begin to make into an object of holistic reflection a historically existent life form. The logical and epistemological problems associated with reflecting on the activity of reflection itself denies that capacity to any particular life-form itself. Consistent with Hegel’s general claims about philosophical reflection, any subsequent reflectivity occurs only after the fact, only after a “shape of life has grown old” (PR 23). The process of transformation may be indeed be construed, with Jaeggi, as a learning process, but it is one that occurs only retrospectively. One form of life is realized only in its supersession.<sup>37</sup>

This is not to say, however, that an existent form of life does not play a role in its subsequent transformation. Hegel’s position rather is that that later transformation is incubated by the present culture itself. This is so for at least two reasons, both previously suggested. First, an existing form of life, in enacting a necessarily incomplete mode of self-reflection, triggers the need for the higher form of reflection performed by the subsequent form of life. Second, an existing form of life—on a model of selfhood rooted in the modes of reciprocal recognition demanded by the concept of spirit—incorporates into its own self-understanding anticipations of another life-form’s reflection on it. Both are respects in which an

existing form of life is “the inward birth-place of the spirit that will later arrive at actual form” (LHPI, 55).

A similar point can be made when considering the reflective activity of the subsequent culture itself. What occasions the reflective activity of the subsequent form of life is an effort to resolve the tensions and disparities endemic to the subject–object opposition associated with the previous culture’s inability to make itself fully an object of reflection. Paraphrasing what Hegel claimed about philosophy generally, we might say that here, too, bifurcation is the occasion for cultural reflection. In addition, the mode of reflection specific to the subsequent form of life is the same as that of any form of life—establishing and reestablishing its own identity in the face of the received and given conditions of its existence: “This is the function of our own and of every age: to grasp the knowledge which is already existing [and] to make it our own” (LHPI, 3). A central feature of that existing knowledge, however, is just the mode of life bequeathed to it by a predecessor. Hence, its own self-identity is established in coming to terms with a prior form of life even as it also surpasses it. Here, too, “we are what we are through history” (LHPI, 2).<sup>38</sup>

Hegel’s distinctive account of the relationship of past, present, and future may be further specified by briefly considering his general account of historical development. According to Gérard Lebrun, Hegel holds that “history runs forward only for those who look at it backward; it is linear progression only in retrospect.”<sup>39</sup> The account advanced in the present chapter seconds Lebrun’s reading. Here, too, it is maintained that historical progress is rooted, not in a developmental telos presumed to infuse existing phenomena, but only in the *post festum* reflection on such phenomena. But this is not to say that such progress is a wholly retrospective affair. The distinctiveness of Hegel’s dialectical account, conceived as a “circle of circles” (Enc1 §15), is that such retrospectivity is itself prospectively generated.

History for Hegel is the progress in the consciousness and self-consciousness of freedom. As such, it is not an account of an existing developmental order available to theoretical analysis and examination. Instead, it is constitutively dependent on the performative experience of individuals comprehending themselves and their circumstance. History is not the “[b]ecoming of things foreign to us, but the Becoming of ourselves and our own knowledge” (LHPI 4). Consistent with Hegel’s conception of freedom as selfhood in otherness, history proceeds as persons and peoples establish and reestablish their identity as they come to terms with the existing conditions of their experience. For reasons already indicated, however, processes of cultural self-affirmation are never fully consummated. The logic of self-reflection is such that every such attempted self-realization of freedom on the part of a particular form of life is bequeathed to a subsequent form of life, which from a more distant vantage point is positioned to offer a more comprehensive

understanding of its predecessor's own efforts at self-comprehension. In grasping what has gone before, every age strives to make what has gone before its own "and in so doing to develop it further and to raise it to a higher level" (LPHI, 3).

History thus does run forward for those who look at it from behind. As indicated as well, however, Hegel rejects an abstract contraposition of the future to the present, the retrospective to the prospective. Not only is the subsequent reflectivity triggered by the aporias associated with an existing process of self-reflection; its own contribution to the progress in the consciousness of freedom is also fashioned in its transformative appropriation of a received state of affair, one shaped by the previous culture's effort to establish its own sense of autonomous identity. As the progress in the consciousness of freedom, history may indeed run forward for those who look at it from behind, yet the retrospective perspective is itself prospectively occasioned by antecedent occurrences. For Hegel, history progresses through processes of recollection (*Erinnerung*), yet such recollection is itself enacted through modes of reflective internalization (*Er-innerung*), and indeed on the part of both the object and the subject of recollection (see PS 493).

Hegel is often criticized for subordinating his reflection on society and politics to the requirements of his logic and metaphysics. In one version of that critique, he is said to foreclose attention to alternate social developments by fashioning his practical philosophy in terms of the self-comprehending reason specific to his metaphysic of spirit. In the foregoing analysis I have disputed this contention. I have done so by focusing on four features of his account of political life: its internal reflexivity, its character as historically realized freedom, its interculturality and its futurity. In all, I have sought to indicate that, far from precluding an openness to context-transcending phenomena, Hegel's logic of spirit—with its core notion of a substance becoming subject to itself—demands and fosters it. To be sure, different elements of the account of spirit have been deployed in support of this reading. Sometimes attention has been accorded to the idea of internal reflexivity itself. On other occasions it has been to the underlying idea of the identity of identity and difference, a concept central equally to Hegel's accounts of freedom, the intersubjective dimension of individual self-identity and the mutually implicative relationship of retrospective and prospective modes of social analysis. In all cases, though, an openness has been shown to inhere in Hegel social and political thought and, indeed, not in spite of but because of its reliance on the resources of a philosophy of spirit.

## 5. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has not been to defend a general account of the relationship of metaphysics and politics in Hegel.<sup>40</sup> Instead, I have focused

on the particular value of Hegel's metaphysic of spirit. I have done so in part because some of today's most prominent students of Hegel's practical philosophy have claimed that its nature and ongoing value are best understood only by demarcating his social and political thought from his logical-systematic account of spirit. Against this view, I have sought to elucidate the centrality of that account for a general appreciation of Hegel's doctrine of politics. Focusing especially on the principle of internal reflexivity proper to a notion of spirit understood as the subjective rendering of substantiality, I have sought to demonstrate the special value of that principle for understanding Hegel's action theory, his account of ethicality and the context-transcending openness inherent in his conception of social and political life. In all cases I have argued that reference to the logical-metaphysical account of spirit fosters appreciation of the nature, uniqueness and vitality of core elements of Hegel's philosophy of politics and practical philosophy generally. My aim has not been to suggest that the metaphysic of spirit might not also pose challenges for an appropriation of Hegel's doctrine of politics, nor has it been to assert that that appropriation cannot meaningfully be conducted without recourse to the resources of that metaphysic. However, given the systematic nature of Hegel's thought, as well the place occupied by his social and political thought within his broader philosophy of spirit, it is also clear that reference to the logical-metaphysical categories should not be minimized, ignored or dismissed. Indeed, by focusing on certain select issues I hope to have provided some compelling reasons why the connection of these elements in Hegel's thought should be accentuated.

## Notes

- 1 Jürgen Habermas, "From Kant to Hegel and Back Again: The Move Toward Detranscendentalization," in *Truth and Justification*, trans. Barbara Fultner. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 175–212.
- 2 Axel Honneth, *Freedom's Right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life*, trans. Joseph Ganahl. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 56, translation amended.
- 3 Axel Honneth, *The Pathologies of Individual Freedom: Hegel's Social Theory*, trans. Ladislaus Löb. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 4.
- 4 Robert Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead: Historical Essays in the Metaphysics of Intentionality*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002). Consider his claim that Hegel's concept of *Geist* denotes "the recognitive community of all those who have such normative statuses [authority, responsibility, commitment, and entitlement], and their normatively significant activities" (227).
- 5 See the "Preface" to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977) [hereafter PS], 10 & 14
- 6 G. W. F. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic: Part 1 of the Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences with Zusätze*, trans. T. F. Garaets, W. A. Suchting and H. S. Harris. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Co, 1991) [hereafter Enc. 1], §24.

- 7 G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. H. N. Nisbet. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) [hereafter PR], §2.
- 8 G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Mind: Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences*, trans. by William Wallace and A. V. Miller. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971) [hereafter Enc3], §377Zu.
- 9 G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller. (New York: Humanities Press, 1976) [hereafter SL], 37.
- 10 Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German Idealism*, ed. David S. Pacini. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 289.
- 11 See Rolf-Peter Horstmann, "Substance, Subject, and Infinity: A Case Study of the Role of Logic in Hegel's System," in Katerina Deligiorgi (ed.), *Hegel: New Directions*. (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 69–84.
- 12 G. W. F. *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History. Introduction: Reason in History*, trans. H. B. Nisbet. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975) [hereafter *Lectures*], 127, amended.
- 13 Arto Laitinen and Constantine Sandis (eds.), *Hegel on Action*. (Houndmills; Basingstoke; Hampshire; New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2010).
- 14 Charles Taylor, "Hegel and the Philosophy of Action," in Lawrence S. Stepelevich and David Lamb (eds.), *Hegel's Philosophy of Action*. (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1983), 1–18.
- 15 Robert Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), especially Chapter 6.
- 16 For a related discussion, see Andrew Buchwalter, *Dialectics, Politics, and the Contemporary Value of Hegel's Practical Philosophy*. (London; New York: Routledge, 2011), chap 6.
- 17 G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts: Nach der Vorlesungsanschrift von H.G. Hotho 1822/23*, in Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie 1818–1831*, ed. K. H. Ilting. (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1973) [VRP], Vol. 3 [hereafter Hotho], §260.
- 18 Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy*, 147.
- 19 *Dialectics, Politics, and the Contemporary Value of Hegel's Practical Philosophy*, chap 6.
- 20 VRP1, 287.
- 21 The role of reciprocal recognition is emphasized especially in the version of the *Philosophy of Right* transcribed by Wannenmann. See G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft*, eds. Claudia Becker et al. and trans. P. Wannenmann. (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1983), §124.
- 22 See VI.A.b of the "Spirit" section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*: "Ethical Action" (*Sittliche Handlung*), 279–289. To be sure, the concept of *sittliche Handlung* is thematized more explicitly in this text than in the later work on political philosophy.
- 23 Axel Honneth, "The Normativity of Ethical Life," *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol. 40, no. 8 (2014): 818.
- 24 See Andrew Buchwalter, "'The Ethicality in Civil Society': Bifurcation, *Bildung*, and Hegel's Supersession of the Aporias of Social Modernity," in David James (ed.), *Hegel's "Elements of the Philosophy of Right": A Critical Guide*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 116–136.
- 25 Axel Honneth, "Of the Poverty of Our Liberty: The Greatness and Limits of Hegel's Doctrine of Ethical Life," in Jacques Rancière and Axel Honneth, eds. Katia Genel and Jean-Philippe Deranty, *Recognition or Disagreement: A Critical Encounter on the Politics of Freedom, Equality, and Identity*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 159.

- 26 For another attempt to construe the approach employed by Hegel in his practical philosophy as a “two-sided analysis,” see Karl-Heinz Ilting, “The Dialectic of Civil Society,” in Z. A. Pelczynski (ed.), *The State and Civil Society: Studies in Hegel's Political Philosophy*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 211–216. In this work Ilting discerns in Hegel's political thought a distinction between a “phenomenology of the consciousness of freedom” and a “philosophical reconstruction of the Idea of freedom.” In my view this approach also fails to acknowledge the uniquely dialectical nature of Hegel account of a social reality. On this point, see my *Dialectic, Politics, and the Contemporary Value of Hegel's Practical Philosophy*, 238–40.
- 27 Honneth, “Of the Poverty of Our Liberty, 174gh.
- 28 *Vorlesungen über Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft/Wannenmann*, §134.
- 29 For a discussion of the relationship of subjectivity and temporality in Hegel, see Oscar Daniel Brauer, *Dialektik der Zeit: Untersuchungen zu Hegels Metaphysik der Weltgeschichte*. (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1982), 152–155.
- 30 “From Kant to Hegel and Back Again,” 202–205.
- 31 See my “Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831),” in Amy Allen and Eduardo Mendieta (eds.), *Habermas Lexicon*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).
- 32 G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte. Bd 1: Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister. (Hamburg: Meiner, 1994), 121.
- 33 For this consider my discussions in the following: “Hegel Conception of an ‘International We,’” in *Dialectics, Politics, and the Contemporary Value of Hegel's Practical Philosophy*, Chap 10, 201–213 and “Hegel, Global Justice, and Mutual Recognition,” in Andrew Buchwalter (ed.), *Hegel and Global Justice*. (Dordrecht NL: Springer, 2012), 211–232.
- 34 G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy I*, trans. E. S. Haldane and Frances Simson. (Atlantic Highlands NJ: Humanities Press, 1983) [hereafter LHPI], 54f.
- 35 Rahel Jaeggi, “Towards an Immanent Critique of Forms of Life,” *Raisons Politiques*, no. 57 (2015/1). doi:10.3917/rai.057.0013, 26f.
- 36 VRP1, 342f.
- 37 See Oscar Brauer, *Dialektik der Zeit*, 186–190.
- 38 As Hegel is also fond of saying, “Wesen ist was gewesen ist” (see Enc1 §112A).
- 39 Gérard Lebrun, *L'envers de la dialectique: Hegel à la lumière de Nietzsche*. (Paris: Seuil, 2004), 44, cited in Slavoj Žižek, *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism*. (London; New York: Verso 2012), 218.
- 40 Cf. Andrew Buchwalter, “A Critique of Non-Metaphysical Readings of Hegel's Practical Philosophy,” in Allegra de Laurentiis (ed.), *Hegel and Metaphysics: On Logic and Ontology in the System*. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2016), 71–88.

# 3 Speculative Logic as Practical Philosophy

## Political Life in Times of Crisis

*Angelica Nuzzo*

### 1. Thinking in Times of Crisis

Thinking about politics from the inescapable position of our current actuality is thinking about politics from a situation of deep historical crisis. But it is also, quite simply and equally inescapably, an attempt at thinking (philosophically) in times of crisis. That it is so is today hardly surprising. It is, rather, a plain truism. And this is also hardly a new enterprise for philosophy (and for philosophers). In a sense, philosophy is—and has always been—a way to cope with epochal crises. However, how philosophy's enterprise can be carried out in times of crisis remains a haunting challenge. Crisis as such is always connected with transformation: either because change, being underway, shakes up things and brings the old order to a crisis or because the present order is stalling (or is perceived as stalling) and change is somehow required (alternatively, desired, needed, hoped for or feared). Crisis, just as change and transformation, marks out an in-between predicament—between old and new, past and future, known and unknown. Moreover, in the face of it, the situation of crisis seems to be one we try to get out of—either wishing to go back to a previous way of life or attempting to move forward to something different than what has been known heretofore. In turn, these different attitudes that may inform the act of moving away from the crisis clearly embody different (and diverging) political positions. At the most general level, then, the following questions that need to be asked: “How does transformation in human affairs—in the social, political, historical world, in the world of *Sittlichkeit*, in Hegel's terminology—come about?” “How can transformation be grasped and be conceptualized from the position of immanence, that is, while living immersed in it?” and, finally, “How can transformation be produced by human action—by individual, social, political action?” It is clear herein—that is, facing crisis and transformation—that the philosophical question is closely connected to the political question.

In 1807, in the preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* written after having completed the entire work and while living in a period of deep



historical transformation and deep historical crisis, Hegel famously summed up the philosopher's predicament as follows:

It is not difficult to see that our time is a time of birth and transition (*Übergang*) to a new period. Spirit has come to a break with the previous world of its existence and representation, and is about to sink this world in the past and to start the work of its own transformation (*Umgestaltung*). Indeed, spirit is never in a state of quiet,

as it is caught in a constant progressive movement.<sup>1</sup> Hegel writes during the transitional period that sees Europe coming out of the turmoil of the French Revolution, prey of Napoleon's sweeping designs of conquests, stage of new social, juridical and political experimentations. In this world, the Industrial Revolution has already begun. For Hegel the contemporary observer, the present is an open process full of uncertainties just as an open process is the work of the philosophical science at the beginning of its tasks of comprehension. We do not know anything of the new age about to begin except that it is new and different from the one we have lived in so far and that it results from the complete shattering of the institutions and the certainties of the old regime. A radical break has occurred, a revolutionary break the chronological beginning of which one can date back to July 14, 1789 (and the end of which may be sanctioned by Napoleon's coup of the 18 Brumaire, 1799). Passing through the events of 1794—which mark the crisis of the revolution—the development out of such a beginning has eclipsed an old social and political order; erased old institutions, forms of life and ideas; and thereby has ushered in a new epoch in world history. To live and think during this period is to be caught in the in-between of a historical crisis. What is needed is a new method of comprehension, a new way of acting and living in this world. If philosophical thinking takes on the character of crisis as well it also harbors the promise of serving as a tool out the crisis.

There is, to be sure, a measure of promise and confidence in Hegel's portrait of the present age in the cited passage, and there is the awareness of the effort required to carry out its momentous change, of the "price" that one has to pay for every step undertaken along a path that is all but certain and straightforward.<sup>2</sup> Most important, however, Hegel's remark betrays a certain puzzlement in front of the task that the present world poses to philosophy. For Hegel's real focus is not so much to predict the possible contours of the new epoch about to begin but to comprehend the transition itself—to comprehend the *Übergang* that leads to it and produces the new, to grasp the process of deep transformation or *Umgestaltung* in which spirit and contemporary consciousness are inexorably caught. In effect, this is the true object of philosophical comprehension; this is the chief challenge to it. In the preface to the 1821 *Philosophy of Right*, philosophy is famously viewed as "its own time apprehended in



thought,”<sup>3</sup> and when one’s time is a time of crisis and historical change, philosophy’s task is precisely to give an account of such crisis and historical change. But how can the movement of “transition” itself (or the “birth” of the new, for that matter) be grasped? Neither the past nor the future but the changing present in its changing quality; neither the origin nor the destination of the historical process of transformation in their isolated, static occurrence but the very movement of transformation taking place in the middle, between the beginning and the end, the movement in which our lives are presently immersed and engaged. How can transformation be conceptualized when all distance between the process and its apprehension (and hence the possibility of a distinct standpoint—or stand-point—and a perspective of sort) is erased; when thinking is one with the changing process that is being thought?<sup>4</sup> It is at this point that we first meet our challenge. Philosophy, Hegel will declare in later years thereby drawing a sort of empowering limitation to its task, should not attempt to make predictions with regard to the future. Philosophy’s job is, rather, the understanding of the present in situations of crisis, namely, in moments of transition and indeed conflict and contradiction between different life and thought formations, between the old that is no longer and the new that is not yet. But how can the contradictory tension that separates and at the same time brings together the slow continuity of growth and the sudden unexpected hiatus of birth be brought to conceptual knowledge and thereby explained by a unity of sense? The task outlined by these questions can be seen as the necessary condition of all transformative action—individual and collective, moral, political and historical. To be sure, however, the answer to that question *is* itself, at its core, what transformative action properly is. It is on this convergence between thinking transformation and producing it that I place my reading of Hegel’s *Logic*. Its task is a comprehension of transformative processes as such—a task that is itself, first and foremost, a deeply transformative action.

## 2. Hegel’s Logic of Action: Advancing from the Crisis

Speaking to his contemporaries, Hegel can indeed quite plainly say that “it is not difficult to see” that we live in a time of transition to a new epoch. It is not difficult to see because life provides immediate evidence for this claim in lived uncontroversial facts. We could all subscribe to that today (although the truth of facts comes increasingly under attack). But he famously warns that what is known to common sense (what is *bekannt*) is still not conceptually grasped, is not yet philosophical knowledge (is not *erkannt*, which explains why, today, the truth of facts comes so easily under attack: Truth is not opinion but knowledge).<sup>5</sup> Indeed, what is most easily seen, felt and lived in its immediate certainty, is the hardest thing to grasp conceptually, is the real challenge to philosophy. The day-to-day

chronicle of events is quite different from the unified, allegedly meaningful story told after a form of life has completed its course and can no longer be rejuvenated or called back to life, only understood.<sup>6</sup> This is precisely the task to be undertaken: to give conceptual, rational form to the mere feeling, perception or indeed “experience” of change and to tell, philosophically and reflectively, but also paradoxically, the story of the present at the only proper time in which it can be told, namely, when the present is no longer present. In 1807, with the *Phenomenology*, Hegel provides a “logic of change” that takes “consciousness” as its concrete object, that is, as the place in which change occurs and becomes visible as concrete subjective experience. Accordingly, in this work the philosophical understanding of transition is the understanding of how transition and change take place in and for consciousness and are produced by consciousness.<sup>7</sup> In the *Science of Logic*, by contrast, Hegel takes transition as such as its object, that is, transition in its pure logical forms independently of consciousness—independently of *who* experiences it, of *what* it affects, of *by whom* or *what* it is brought about. Hegel’s Logic, I have claimed elsewhere, is first and foremost a “logic of transformative processes.”<sup>8</sup> The further point that I want to make here is that such logic succeeds as a logic of transformative processes because it is a “logic of action,” that is, a logic that *performs* and *produces* the very transformation it aims at grasping. Ultimately, Hegel fully subscribes to Gianbattista Vico’s *degnità: verum est factum*. His dialectic-speculative logic accounts for transformation by performing or enacting transformation. On this basis, I submit, Hegel’s Logic is the best framework for thinking of politics in times of crisis—Hegel’s own time of crisis as well as ours.

In what follows I briefly dwell on this general interpretation of the nature and task of Hegel’s Logic—an interpretation that I have extensively developed in other works. I then concentrate on the second moment of the logical method, the moment of the “advancement” or *Fortgang* and argue that the action that advances or the action that produces the advancement is fundamentally connected with the crisis generated and encountered within the logical process of transformation. Finally, in order to show the relevance of this account of Hegel’s logical “method” for our reflection on historical and political crisis more generally, I turn to other authors such as Thucydides and Gramsci.

In its movement, Hegel’s dialectic-speculative logic accounts for the dynamic of real *processes as processes*: natural, psychological but also social, political, and historical processes. It attempts to think change and transformation in their dynamic flux not by fixating movement in abstract static descriptions but by *performing movement* itself. By bringing change to bear directly on pure thinking, by making thinking one with the movement it accounts for, Hegel’s logic *does* the very thing that it purports to understand. Thereby the question of the intelligibility of actuality taken in its purely logical form becomes a practical issue or an

issue of praxis as much as one of theory. The descriptive function that the logic claims toward actuality goes hand in hand with a fundamentally normative function that concerns the ways in which transformations are actually produced. Thereby, the doctrine that Hegel finally consigns to the *Science of Logic* and the first part of the *Encyclopaedia* differs methodologically from the development staged in the *Phenomenology*, which still distinguished the static, external standpoint of the philosophical “we” from the ever-changing, experiential position of consciousness. Unlike the *Phenomenology*, Hegel’s logic is the logic of movement itself immanently developed in its pure or purely formal structures. The only way to understand change without turning it into its opposite is to take change upon oneself, that is, to perform it. On the other hand, however, within Hegel’s system of philosophy this is also what distinguishes the Logic from the *Realphilosophie*—the philosophy of nature and spirit. The logic offers an account (and a performance) of the structures of change independently of the question of what it is that changes; that is, it takes transformation in the constellation of its pure forms, independently of the particular contingent and empirical conditions under which it may occur. The transformation process with which Hegel’s Logic is concerned (descriptively as well as normatively) is both the movement of reality’s dynamic transformation and the process of thinking’s own internal transformation.

In this framework I suggest viewing the pure, immanent development of the logic as the “action” taking place in it. This is the action performed by pure thinking but is also the action by which pure thinking is first constituted in what it properly is. In other words, there is no *res cogitans*, no “I think”—no substantial, transcendental, phenomenological subject—that preexists the articulation of the action in which thinking itself, being identical with the discursive process or activity of thinking, is first developed. There is only the immanent unfolding of the action as a pure process. Now, in good Aristotelian fashion, all performance (and all movement) displays three structural moments, namely, beginning, advancement or middle and end. These moments, however, can be detected as what they are only once the overall action has been performed, not while the action is being performed. In other words, the account of the method can come only at the end. The middle moment of the advancement is the moment on which the dynamic, transformative character of the action depends. The difficulty herein consists in not viewing the intermediary stage as a mere means connecting the beginning to the end and dispensable once the end has been achieved but in recognizing it a somehow foundational function with regard to the other moments. At stake is the problem of what it means for a movement as movement—for the pure activity of thinking—to carry on, to take the next step, to advance, as it were. And here I should make the proviso that when I speak of “advancing,” I simply mean “moving on”—that is,

I mean, first, the opposite of being halted or fixed, and I mean, second, something along the lines of moving on to a different position or place than the one previously occupied or doing things in a way that is different than the way things were previously done. The relevant point, however, is that I don't make any assumption or claim with regard to the direction of such movement, and I don't make any value judgment regarding the ground gained by such advance (whether it is progressive or regressive, desirable or undesirable, better or worse in an axiological scale). These assumptions and considerations become instead central when at stake are political action and historical evaluation and reconstruction. The method that Hegel presents at the end of the *Logic* is the formal articulation of the phases that constitute, retrospectively, the dynamic development of the logical movement *as movement*, that is, as a process that first and only at this point can be articulated in the moments of beginning, advancement, end. There are, to be sure, many different ways or modalities in which thinking can begin, advance, end its thinking activity—there are many contrasting ways in which movements do begin, advance and end and many contents with which beginnings and so on can be made. What the logical method thematizes is that which all actions that advance have in common insofar as they imply the formal movement of advancing. Hence, the methodological question is, “What is advancing—*Fortgehen*?”

The method, explains Hegel at the beginning of the Absolute Idea chapter of the *Logic*, “may initially appear” in its common, more restricted sense, to be “the mere modality (*Art und Weise*) of cognition.” However, the method comes to the fore once the absolute idea has been proved to be the identity of the still “one-sided” positions of the theoretical and the practical idea—the “idea of the true” and the “idea of the good.”<sup>9</sup> Hegel's dialectic-speculative logic presents the method from a position that has constitutively overcome the separation of theory and praxis (as well as the separation of concept and reality). Accordingly, method is not a provisional instrument for achieving truth or the good dispensable once truth (and the good) has allegedly been attained. Method is a position *inside* the truth, hence constitutive of it; it is the form of truth's dynamic articulation and enactment. Thus, the “absolute method” is that which the “absolute idea” properly turns out to be: It is the explicit thematization of *the way of doing* that which the concept has been doing throughout the *Logic* and the result of which, circularly, is precisely the method. Herein no new *content* is introduced. The method is the new *form* in which the determinations heretofore produced are thought and enacted again and are thought and enacted anew. Hegel's insistence, then, is on the meaning of the “modality” that the method is—modality of cognition, to be sure, but also modality of action.<sup>10</sup> The *Art und Weise* and *Modalität* proper of the method is the formal way in which the content, which is, at this point, the overall activity of pure thinking displayed in

the entire course of the Logic, is structured so that (1) the dynamism proper to it as a whole is accounted for, (2) the stages of its inner development come to light and (3) the unity of sense proper to the different actions that constitute it finally emerges as the unity of the transformation process that Hegel finally designates as the “system” of the logic. Method, Hegel shows, is itself a type of activity—it is the “universal absolute activity (*Tätigkeit*)” of pure thinking; it is the true moving principle of the process itself—it is its “soul and substance,” the animating principle which gives life to the whole.<sup>11</sup>

The second moment of the method considered in its pure logical formality is the action that advances—*Fortgehen*. It develops immanently from the beginning because this is the beginning *of a process and a development*.<sup>12</sup> And yet Hegel underscores that advancing is not a mere surplus or “excess” over and above the beginning and is not a mere implication of it, already nested in the beginning and entirely exhausted by it.<sup>13</sup> Hegel expresses these two points—the necessary connection to the beginning yet its fundamental independency from it—by saying that advancing is both synthetic and analytic in relation to the beginning. The *methodological* questions of the advancement are, “What does it mean for action to proceed, to move on once it has begun, and how does this modality shape the structure of the movement itself?” Notice that this question (which regards the form and modality of the action *Fortgehen*) is different from the question of advancing taken as a question of content, which could be phrased as a simple “Now what; what comes next?” and “*What* is it that must be thought as the next category?” Hegel sees difference and contradiction as the chief functions of the middle moment of the method, as the functions whereby the immediacy of the beginning is forever disturbed and interrupted, a transition is produced across which the beginning is carried, thereby advancing the overall process, making it internally different from itself, making it really transformative as a process.

Hegel opposes the dialectical mode of progressing to the way in which finite, mere “searching knowledge”<sup>14</sup> construes its advancement, which is ultimately no real advancement but either the static repetition of the same or the distracted gesture of looking for some external motivation or aim in order to carry on. In its random searching about with no direction or in its appeal to external goals finite thinking only tries to escape the emptiness of the beginning. The middle has no relevance here: What counts are only the beginning and the end; the middle is only instrumental and ultimately disposable—as instrumental and disposable as the *process* connecting the beginning to the end. Arguing against this view, Hegel contends that in order for the advancement to be made thinking should not aim at anything else besides attending to a firm consideration of the determinations “in and for themselves.”<sup>15</sup> For, in attending to things in their actual presence their “soul,” which is their inner movement and internal contradiction, is first brought to light. Conversely, it is only a

self-generated movement that is able to reveal what things truly are (what they are “in and for themselves”). This is what Hegel means by suggesting that while there is no (external) method prescribing how to advance (this is the method of finite thinking that leads to no true advance), the action that advances insofar as it advances is the second moment of the absolute method. The interesting paradox here is that the true advancement is made only by dwelling where one is, not by aiming forward in pursuit of something else. Advancement is made by attending only to the action one is presently performing and to the place one presently occupies without striving toward another condition, without invoking external motivations or interventions. True advance is made only by fulfilling one’s present commitment in all its internal implications; progress is made only by staying where one is or by persisting in carrying through the initial action to its final consequences (taking full responsibility for it), not by looking away from it aiming at something else.

Thus, it is by following through with the present determination—what Hegel calls *Durchführung*—that transformation is accomplished. This explains Hegel’s appeal to the virtue of “patience” when at stake is “the work of the negative,” which characterizes dialectic and opposes dialectical thinking to the impatience of intellectual intuition, content only with results or with an instantaneous, all-consuming beginning.<sup>16</sup> Patience is needed in order to dwell within the problem at hand—an act that is crucial to dialectical advancement and has a crucial practical import. For the solution is always nested within the problem. One should only learn how to find it by attending to the problem itself (not by attempting to escape it). This reveals the “synthetic” nature of the method. The consideration of the logical form “in and for itself”—in its actuality and presence even though it is only an empty presence—generates the “otherness” and the “difference” that necessarily reside within that form,<sup>17</sup> thereby pointing to the fact that each determination is as such in itself a contradiction and consequently entails a necessary “transition”<sup>18</sup>—the *Übergang* to something else, to the other of itself. It is only by patiently dwelling where one is that the contradictory predicament of one’s own position can come to light and thereby lead on to immanent self-transformation. Thus, the movement of advancing—or the action that advances—is a transition accomplished without aiming at anything other than what one already has because what one has is a contradiction, is the predicament of an inner splitting difference—is the condition of being the other of oneself.<sup>19</sup> Contradiction is the soul of all movement because it lies in the middle of it. In the powerful action of the advance contradiction discloses its force by bringing the beginning out of its original simplicity, by generating its other and thereby fundamentally changing the entire process.

*Fortgang* is the dialectical, transformative moment of thinking. The advancement is produced by “difference” and negativity—by a difference that does not intervene “from outside” and is not brought to bear on the

process by “external reflection” but is “found” within the present determination as what makes it be what it properly is. Advancing is the movement of transition to otherness with the duplicity and duplication that this implies and is the “judgment” (*Urteil*) or the “splitting” (*Urteilung*) that both draw differences and acknowledge, reflectively, that the simplicity of the beginning must inevitably be revisited in the advancement as the unity of that which is in itself different.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the second moment of the method brings to the fore its properly “dialectical” negativity.<sup>21</sup> On Hegel’s account, dialectic is the “standpoint in which a universal first, considered in and for itself reveals itself as the other of itself.”<sup>22</sup> In the final perspective offered by the method dialectic reveals that the process of the whole is both continuous (the method is analytic; difference is immanent) and fundamentally discontinuous (the method is synthetic; difference is in the gap that makes the transition to other).<sup>23</sup>

So configured, the advancement is the “*turning-point* (*Wendungspunkt*) of the movement of the concept.”<sup>24</sup> The reversal achieved by the second moment of the method allows for a radically new consideration of the logical development. It is the beginning of a retrospective restructuring of the logical sequence (and more generally of historical facts and individual and collective experiences) in the circularity of a reflected whole—it is the emergence of a totality that only now, for the first time, can be actually displayed in its unitary form. This explains why, for Hegel, this is the point in which the succession of logical determinations begins to take on the form of a “system”—the form of the “system of totality”<sup>25</sup> that the methodological moment of the “end” will finally bring to completion. It is only at this point that the succession of logical determinations coalesces to form, properly, the unitary structure of the Logic.

The dialectical reversal or *Wendungspunkt* achieved by the act of advancing is the place where “truth” first emerges. In this sense, the “turning point of the method” also produces a reversal in the structure of cognition, bringing it back to itself.<sup>26</sup> As the space in which the splitting of the simplicity of the beginning in judgment occurs, the advancement not only discloses its truth—that is, its deeper meaning and implications—but also subverts it by mediating its immediacy and apparent simplicity, by turning the beginning into something different and new. For, truth does not lie in the simplicity of the beginning (or in one of the extremes taken in isolation) but only in the split movement of advancing, that is, in judgment, where truth first comes to light in its different, contradictory form. Truth is not in the alleged originality of the solitary beginning—immediate, unutterable, sterile if not connected to the advancing power of difference and negativity. Just as truth is not in the end result taken as a fixed goal severed from the process that has led to it. Truth is, rather, in the force of difference and negativity that immanently transforms the beginning turning it into the “other of itself.”



According to the methodological character of the moment of the advancement, the negativity proper to judgment produces a *crisis*. Herein lies the transformative dimension of the advancing action. Although judgment expresses the concept's free act of self-determination, it also sanctions the crisis of the unity of its moments that in the division or split of judgment ceases to exist. However, precisely *such crisis* is the development and realization of the concept—its *Entwicklung* and *Realisierung*. Originally, that is, in its etymological meaning, judgment is crisis—κρίσις. But judgment is crisis—and is an original crisis—also because it shows that while the concept in its initial, allegedly autonomous position claimed to be thoroughly determined in its moments, truly no determinateness precedes judgment as all determinateness (and truth and meaning) first proceeds from it. The relation that judgment institutes and that is identical with the split that it produces is the crisis of the “unity of the concept.” For it shows that such unity is only the relation of self-subsistent, fixed terms, “not yet the concrete, fulfilled unity returned to itself from [this] reality.” In this way, the concept as a fulfilled concrete unity results from judgment, which is accordingly a more original action: “Judgment is the diremption (*Diremption*) of the concept through itself.” Or, in an equivalent formulation, it is “the original split of the original one.”<sup>27</sup>

The crisis that judgment brings forth in the concept's abstract unity through its original split (or the crisis that the concept brings onto itself in the action of judgment) pauses the process and brings it to the halt of a *stasis*. In fact, the moment of *crisis-stasis* that is judgment is the logical place in which the action pulls together in order to advance by gaining a truly new direction able to critically discriminate or indeed “decide” among possible alternatives. This is the “turning point” in which the new course of events emerges that brings the concept to its “realization.”<sup>28</sup>

### 3. Other Crises: Stasis and Advancement

Let me so sum up Hegel's account of the middle moment of the method in order show how this constellation can be fruitfully used to think of politics in times of historical crisis. The action that advances is the “crisis” of the unfolding action; this crisis is a moment of acute contradiction and conflict that implies a “*stasis*” in the movement. And yet, at the same time, the crisis sanctions the “turning point” of the movement. Dialectically it is precisely the standstill in the movement that produces the true advance by creating the space for judgment (a stand-point, as it were), and thereby for the overcoming of the crisis. *Stasis* is itself a contradictory predicament: It is the moment of suspension and gathering from which judgment arises, and it is the moment of implosion and collapse of the universal or the political whole, its radical split.<sup>29</sup> Now I want to turn to the sphere of politics and more generally of *Sittlichkeit*, and indicate



this crisis-*stasis* as the predicament of “living in the interregnum.” I shall dwell on this famous and often-invoked formulation, which takes our analysis back to the general problem of historical actuality raised at the beginning of the essay. Among the central questions that I have claimed Hegel’s “logic of action” can help us address is, on one hand, the issue of understanding the historical transformations underway in our present time, and, on the other, the connected problem of how we can change and transform the ways in which we think and act in our world. Recall that the initial problem was a problem of historical immanence: “How can transformation be detected in moments of crisis given that we live in such moments, given that we are immersed in and part of the crisis itself, given that our conceptual apparatus is deeply rooted in it, that is, is the ‘ideology’ of the present?” “How can we become conscious of the situations in which a turning point in the movement of historical change takes place if a detached observation standpoint is allegedly lacking?” and “Can true judgment arise in the middle of the crisis and lead us out of it advancing beyond it” I address these questions by first shedding some light on the life in the interregnum.

If we follow the indication of Hegel’s method the issue takes on a different form than what these questions seem *prima facie* to entail. For, as we have seen, the possibility of the advancement lies in the “patience”—and indeed the “courage”—that makes us capable of enduring the standstill of the *stasis*,<sup>30</sup> in the capacity to dwell in the conflict that animates the interregnum, not in the frantic search for a way out of the standstill, not in the attempt to flee the discomfort of the crisis. Indeed, the attitude that avoids contradiction—whether by negating, ignoring or repressing it or normalizing it—is always an absolutist attitude. If there is only one true norm and this is valid absolutely, then there can be no true conflict as there can be no alternative norm that can meaningfully contradict it. In this case, however, there is also no true transformation but only a repetition of the same absolute. By contrast, the act of acknowledging in a self-critical stance the reality of conflict is already the first condition of the advancement. Summoning the patience and the courage to dwell in it is the second condition. As Slavoj Žižek puts it, “[t]here are situations when the only truly ‘practical’ thing to do is to resist the temptation to engage immediately and to ‘wait and see’ by means of a patient, critical analysis.”<sup>31</sup>

It would be easy to underestimate the problem by claiming that the resistance to change hence the incapacity to make the advance only concerns the extreme fanatics, that is, those who by no means accept a different opinion and make their own position into an absolute unchanging value, and to retort that these fanatics are rare and that the norm is certainly never fanaticism itself. However, there is an aspect in which the norm (or normality) is, in fact, already a sort of dangerous historical

“absolutism”—the absolutism of the present, I shall call it, and we are all complicit in this. Antonio Gramsci aptly put this point as follows:

The fact . . . to which one hardly pays attention is this: that the ways of life appear to be *absolute* to those who live them, to be “natural” as one says; and it is already a momentous thing to show their “historicity”, to prove that they are justified as long as there exist determinate conditions, but when these conditions change they are no longer justified but “irrational”.<sup>32</sup>

This “natural” absolutism of the present is the absolutism of what Hegel calls “*das Bekannte*”—what is obvious and under everyone’s eyes but for this very reason generally not truly known and recognized (*das Erkannte*).<sup>33</sup> It constitutes the ethical and political universal (the sphere of *Sittlichkeit*) as the pervasive, dominant dimension in which everything in the contemporary world is inscribed for consciousness (even that which remains unconscious—and the universal as the merely *bekanntes* web of social and political habits often does remain unconscious). This is the natural absolutism of the contemporary universal. But this universal has a dynamic structure, and its dynamism implies the necessity of overcoming the absolutism “naturally” nested within it. If the universal encounters a crisis, if it is apparently torn apart and even dissolved by the crisis, the crisis is not its end but a necessary moment of its dynamic advancement and transformation. To discover this, however, is not easy within the position of immanence proper to the present. The function of the method (or, for Gramsci, of the organic intellectual class) is to bring to light the advancement implied in the crisis, the necessity of the transition (in reality and in consciousness) from “*das Bekannte*” to “*das Erkannte*.”

Gramsci sees the natural absolutism of the present as a consequence of the naïve position of immanence: “ways of life” appear “absolute” to whoever is immersed in them because and as long as she is immersed in them. This position is characterized by the utter immediacy that constitutes its apparent naturalness. Herein immanence means also to occupy a sort of totalizing blind spot—a place in which no other ways of life can be actually seen or even imagined or thought of besides one’s own. For this reason, the present way of life counts as the only absolute one—the only actual and possible way of life. It is this immediacy and naturalness that is shaken in situations of historical crisis giving visibility to possible or actual alternatives. Gramsci points to a first “momentous” way out of the absolutism of the present, namely, the act of recognizing the “historicity” of the forms of life otherwise declared absolute. For, these forms “are justified because there exist certain conditions,” which are always and necessarily historical, changing conditions. It is to these

conditions that the present ways of life owe their justification, their validity, and even normativity over the subjects that practice them and endorse them so fully and unconditionally as to see no alternative to them. On these changing conditions hinges the “consensus” of the masses to the ruling class. In fact, absolutism and fundamentalism ultimately amount to embracing an ahistorical position—the a-historicity of an essentialist static universal, of alleged essences and original foundations removed from change and impenetrable to critique. The absolutism of the present responds to the same logic. It follows, however, that as those conditions change, the accepted justification for those present ways of life no longer holds. At this point, the absolute loses its validity and becomes “irrational”—or, better, the attitude of holding on to its changelessness and of refusing to advance becomes irrational. This critique of absolutism and fundamentalism through the claim of history—or through the historical dynamism of the universal—is a position that Gramsci shares with Hegel. In Hegel’s view, Gramsci’s universal that has become “irrational” is the “dead positive” that no longer has a grip on people’s life and no longer is truly alive, actual, present—or *vernünftig*, as it were. The absolutism of the present—of the universal represented by the current forms of life, social practices and culture—meets its crisis in the moment of historical transition in which the conditions of its existence and justification change. The present form of life remains apparently the same, resisting change. Yet as its conditions are changing or have already changed, that way of life is emptied of meaning and validity from within, often hosting opposite and conflicting customs and practices. Crisis is the name of the discrepancy between the fixity of a form of life and the transformation of its conditions. This is the moment in which the universal is no longer hegemonic.

Gramsci introduces the concept of “interregnum” to express this situation of crisis, the dynamism of Hegelian “transition” in which historical transformation and irrational immutability contradictorily coexist, in which change happens and advance is made by driving to the extreme the conflict within the stubbornly persisting present forms of life. The interregnum is the predicament of being-in-the-middle, the paradigmatic moment of the action that advances by apparently stalling. The concept of interregnum has consistently demonstrated its diagnostic function with regard to historical crises throughout the twentieth century up to the present. This is Gramsci’s famous definition of the crisis-interregnum as the condition of being-in-the-middle of historical transformations: “The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old dies and the new cannot be born: in this interregnum a variety of pathological symptoms appear.”<sup>34</sup> The interregnum is a condition of historical and social pathology, a moment of standstill that stretches between the old and the new and the point in which the ethical and political contradiction becomes real, that is, is really felt and lived.

### 3.1. Thucydides' *Stasis*

Long before Gramsci, Thucydides developed the concept of “*stasis*” as a diagnostic “method” to be used by the historian to individuate the occurrence of crises—in the *polis* as well as in other social and political forms of human organization. In Book III of his *History* Thucydides uses the concept of *stasis* to reconstruct, among other particular cases, the paradigmatic *stasis* of Corcyra—the first *stasis* occurring during the Peloponnesian War (427 BC).<sup>35</sup> However, this concept for him is much broader and, as a generalized model, is ultimately meant to designate the entire Peloponnesian War as an internal utterly self-destructive conflict. Ultimately, the *stasis* represented by the Peloponnesian conflict is the turning point of Greek history as reconstructed from Thucydides's present. With the concept of *stasis* Thucydides addresses the dialectical issue plaguing ancient definitions of *stasis*—the issue that embodies, in turn, the contradiction of change widely discussed in early Greek philosophy. For one thing, in the condition of *stasis* the entity in which the condition occurs is and is not at the same time. The entity in question exists as the subject in which the internal war or pathology takes place but also ceases to exist as the entity it is precisely in the moment in which *stasis* manifests itself. Moreover, Thucydides's use of the model of *stasis* directly addresses the issue of historical immanence that interests me here. For, the occurrence of *stasis*, diagnosed on the basis of the symptoms displayed by the political whole, can truly be confirmed or proven true only *after* the conflict is over not while the conflict is taking place. Indeed, the concept of *stasis* belongs to Thucydides's historical *methodology*; it is a hermeneutic device, not just an individual factual occurrence or event described by the historian (say, Corcyra in 427 BC). The “idea” or form expressed by the concept of *stasis* is the structure underlying the actions that “happen and always will happen while human nature remains the same, but which are severer or milder, and different in their manifestations, according as the variations in circumstances present themselves in each case.”<sup>36</sup> What are then the methodological, diagnostic features of *stasis* as a generalized model to be used by the historian mindful of the “variations in circumstances” characterizing each individual case?

In the most general sense, *stasis* is the state of *impasse* in which opposed forces are radicalized and driven to the extreme with no other objective than to cancel each other out. It is indeed a state of “excess of savagery,”<sup>37</sup> as Thucydides puts it—the emphasis being clearly set on the *excess*. It has been noted that construing his idea of *stasis* as a pathology Thucydides does not follow ancient views of health (of the individual as well as the political body) as harmony and balance of multiple factors, and of disease as the rule of one element or force over all others—a common view dominant in Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. *Stasis* is the moment of immanent, internal, and internally produced implosion of

the organic whole or universal, the corruption of its essential elements, namely, the *nomoi*—laws, institutions, customs.<sup>38</sup> Thucydides's account brings to light the "revolution" or the inversion of values, as it were, that produces the internal transformation and sometimes the destruction of the *polis*. The moral, ethical and juridical fabric of the whole is undermined by the fact that everything—family ties, moral values and religious and cultural practices, even language and basic emotions—remain apparently the same and yet are radically perverted by taking on an utterly arbitrary and often opposite meaning as before. This erosion of the basic rules and values of human interaction is ultimately what drives the excess of savagery to which the opposed parties fall prey. *Stasis* is a state in which no determination is valid because all determinations are or may be valid at any time and in any circumstance and for whoever is upholding them. Arbitrariness has free rein. In this situation no advance is possible—no true determination can be gained, no rational objective attained, no honest confrontation, no compromise or conflict resolution reached. Judgment not only is impossible but also becomes irrelevant, while the extremes of emotion and passion rule undisturbed. In fact, contradiction being normalized or becoming so diffused as to penetrate everything seems to be made impotent. Under these conditions, to put it with Gramsci, "the new cannot be born." This is the standstill of *stasis*. Too much, properly everything is in flux for true, that is, determinate and directed movement forward to occur. Indeed, the organic forces able to direct the advance from within seem absent. And yet, dialectically, this standstill is the condition of historical change.

The use of language to which Thucydides turns reflects this account of *stasis*. And hand in hand with language goes moral behavior: "The ordinary acceptation of words in their relation to things was changed as men thought fit"<sup>39</sup> In this way, the meaning and value of actions, speech, customs, family relations and religious and legal practices are utterly perverted:

Reckless audacity came to be regarded as courageous loyalty to party, prudent hesitation as specious cowardice, moderation as a cloak for unmanly weakness . . . Frantic impulsiveness was accounted a true man's part, but caution in deliberation a specious pretext for shrinking.<sup>40</sup>

Ultimately, for Thucydides, *stasis* is an individual and collective mind-set that by profoundly modifying people's actions ultimately transforms the nature of the universal, that is, the collective and political agent that is the *polis*. *Stasis* invests the *logoi* and *erga* that define the actors of this history. Under the condition of *stasis* human behavior changes its meaning, actions no longer follow any rule or arbitrarily follow conveniently made up rules and this despite the fact that the old rules still seem to

remain in place. Thereby the universal of communal life and political interaction is maintained but reconfigured in a perverse way, that is, in a way in which the whole no longer functions as a social whole and individuals no longer pursue rational self-interested ends.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, as Gramsci suggests, the old forms of life are still there but become “irrational.” Under these conditions the universal collapses. Social practices such as oaths and promises are still exchanged, yet since their very structure and purpose are rendered contradictory their ethical value is null: “If in any case oaths of reconciliation were exchanged, for the moment only were they binding, since each side had given them merely to meet the emergency, having at the time no other resource.”<sup>42</sup>

Thucydides’s position here resonates with Hegel’s famous critique of Kant’s discussion of promising as example of the imperative of morality. Significantly, at stake in this critique is the crucial transition *Moralität-Sittlichkeit*, and Hegel’s diagnosis of the blocked development of Kant’s “moral standpoint” as the standpoint that remaining closed in its purely moral absolutism refuses to “make the transition to the concept of ethical life,”<sup>43</sup> that is, ultimately refuses to acknowledge its debt toward the intersubjectively constituted universal. To put the argument in simplified form, in Kant’s view the act of false promising is *morally* wrong because the maxim of meeting an emergency by making a promise with the intention of getting out of it at a future time cannot be universalized. For to universalize this maxim means to render the very concept of promising logically contradictory and practically untenable as on this premise no one would ever accept promises, that is, promising as such would become meaningless.<sup>44</sup> On Hegel’s view, by contrast, the contradiction and practical untenability to which the concept of promising is thereby reduced is displayed only once the practice of false promising in emergency situations is recognized as taking place not at the level of abstract morality but within the ethical context of *Sittlichkeit*. For the ethical universal frames all human practices and interactions lending to them the meaning they actually have. No human practice and interaction has true meaning (and moral validity) in its absoluteness, that is, in isolation from the social and political universal. In this sense, the context of ethical life is the necessary presupposition or the “concrete universal” within which alone moral norms (as well as abstract juridical norms) make sense, that is, have an actual effect. There is nothing contradictory in false promising as such (or in its abstract concept); what renders the concept practically unacceptable (or unenforceable) is only the fact that promising is an ethical and social practice that binds individuals in a community of rules and values. It is *only on this ethical basis* that Kant’s conclusion follows. The subjective prudential maxim of getting out of promises when in distress contradicts the *ethical* institution of promising (not promising as abstract moral norm). Thucydides’s account of *stasis* shows precisely what form the ethical contradiction takes. In line with Hegel’s position, Thucydides’s

point is that individual and social behavior in the pathological state of *stasis* disintegrates the *ethical* whole by perverting the meaning of its practices. Since customs and laws have no independent existence outside of the ethical whole (i.e., are not carriers of abstract moral values), the contradiction that is brought into them does not call them directly out of existence. The contradiction has *real manifestations*. These constitute the pathological reality of *stasis*, the reality of dysfunctional ethical and political institutions. Although individual action still takes place undisturbed, and institutions and conventions apparently still hold, the whole is no longer what it previously was because speech, actions, norms and conventions take on an utterly perverted significance. This is the internal transformation that the ethical whole undergoes in times of *stasis*. Thucydides' is not a moral (or moralistic) point; it is an ethical and political point (in the sense of Hegel's *Moralität-Sittlichkeit* distinction).

In sum, Thucydides's presentation of *stasis* as a methodological concept of historical narrative confirms that the ethical-political universal (or *Sittlichkeit*) changes by going through the radical internal crisis—at once a destruction and a radical reconfiguration—brought forth by extremism. In the crisis or split that is *stasis* all action, individual and collective, of democrats as well as oligarchs is driven to extremism. Crisis-*stasis* is, dialectically, a point of dramatic standstill, the opposite of change, and the situation of radical flux in which everything moves with no direction. It is, however, the situation in which the ethical whole is transformed from within. For this reason, *stasis* is the structural condition of historical change. Moreover, the logic of *stasis* is not a logic of domination but a logic of extremism and immanent division. Extremism produces change by inducing internal self-destruction in the organism that suffers its radicalization. The latter can manifest itself alternatively as resistance to change (absolutism) or as the standstill in which the functioning of customs, laws, and institutions is blocked. The result is the same, namely, *stasis*. Dialectically the true advance needs to confront the implosion and the painful split produced by contradiction. This is the condition of judgment. Ultimately, and more broadly, in Thucydides's view this is the cognitive function of history, the lesson that war offers to posterity and to all times.<sup>45</sup>

### 3.2. *Gramsci's Interregnum*

Let us now turn from Thucydides's *stasis* to Gramsci's "interregnum."<sup>46</sup> The context of Gramsci's introduction of this concept is the discussion of a crisis—the "modern crisis" that for Gramsci writing in the late 1920s and early 1930s Italy follows the collapse of society in the aftermath of World War I. Within this crisis, the interregnum expresses the stalled situation of indeterminacy in which the old is barely kept alive and the transition to the new seems blocked. The interregnum is a pathological



in-between state. At stake are the “ways of life” of the present—the ways of life or the ways of acting and thinking that being precariously suspended between the old and the new, the past and the future, the old and the young generations are fundamentally emptied out of meaning and actual efficacy. This is the case both for the ruling class, which more than ever must resort to violence and coercion to maintain its grip on power, and for the masses, which no longer sustaining the ruling class with their “consensus” ultimately do not recognize those ways of life as their own. The “modern crisis,” Gramsci suggests, is a crisis of hegemony or a “crisis of authority.” It signals a historical moment in which the social, political, ideological change underway is not taken up by the intellectuals and is not organically channeled by a recognized and validated authority. By consequence, the crisis cannot receive its “historically normal solution.” The solution to the crisis is “blocked.” Since the war has produced a radical “rupture . . . between the popular masses and the dominant ideologies,” the former no longer grant the latter their consensus so that the only means for the ruling class to impose their ideology is “by the simple exercise of force.” This, however, underscores the “crisis of authority” that defines the interregnum, not the way out of it. The phenomenon of fascism is the pathology that confirms for Gramsci the persistence of the present crisis.

The interregnum is the point implosion of the present. The historical change brought forth by the war not being organically taken up in consciousness by the intellectual class, and not being enforced and enacted by legitimate organic forces or authorized political powers capable of “leading”—and not simply “ruling” by violence—turns the present into a condition of indeterminacy in which its manifold latent tendencies radicalize to various kinds of extremism. It’s not that change does not happen. In the aftermath of World War I, change has, in fact, happened on a massive scale. But it is a change that in the quagmire of the interregnum paradoxically does not change anything and certainly does not advance the present out of the crisis toward the new.<sup>47</sup> This is the static predicament of the interregnum. This is the nature of extremism, which for Gramsci is exactly the opposite of hegemony. Extremism, in general, is the pathology of the interregnum. Just like in Thucydides’s model of *stasis*, in Gramsci’s interregnum the struggle of competing extremisms “attacks the structure of the old class like a dissolving cancer, weakening and putrefying it. It assumes morbid forms of mysticism, sensualism, moral indifference, pathological degenerations. The old structure does not provide and is unable to satisfy the new needs.”<sup>48</sup> In this way, the pathology of extremism also expresses the hopeless exasperation of the young generation against the old—the interregnum voices here the frustration of the “generational gap” dividing the ruling class itself. The impossibility of an organic “transition” between the old and the young generation radicalizes the young into the extremes of mysticism and



sensualism—moral indifference being only a different expression of the same phenomenon. In Gramsci's assessment, the "death of the old ideologies" along with the "physical dejection" and exhaustion experienced in the aftermath of the war, "will lead, in the long run, to widespread skepticism." Herein lies the common root of the radicalization undergone by the different forces of society. In the political sphere, we are presented with "cynical" positions, and among all with Mussolini's fascism. More generally, dictatorship both in the economic and political spheres is a consequence of the lack of hegemony yet another expression of the pathology of the interregnum.

To be sure, Gramsci's concept of interregnum, unlike Thucydides's *stasis*, is programmatically projected toward the future, to the transition that needs to happen in order for the new to emerge. It is also a concept that arises out of Gramsci's deep interest first and foremost for the cultural and intellectual requirements of revolutionary change. In Gramsci's Marxism the political and economic conditions follow. The connection he establishes between the crisis of the interregnum and the constitution of organic hegemony as the true historical advance addresses precisely the issue of revolutionary change. The way out of the crisis requires the change underlying but stalled in the present to be brought to the self-critical consciousness of the masses in order to become effective, and this, in turn, requires the leadership of the intellectual class—that leadership that is lacking in the interregnum.<sup>49</sup> Ultimately, for Gramsci, the action of advancing is measured by the capacity of the new culture to succeed and successfully (or organically) replace the old. Dialectically, such advance arises out of—and requires dwelling in—its negative, namely, the condition of the interregnum, and is prepared by it.

Let me sum up the preceding reflections and reach my conclusion. With the help of authors as different as Thucydides and Gramsci, I have explored the predicament of being-in-the-middle that embodies the moment of the advancement or *Fortgang* brought to light by Hegel's dialectical method as the crucial "turning point" of all transformation process. With Thucydides and Gramsci, this middle moment indicates the crisis of the "interregnum," the dialectical predicament of *stasis* and standstill but also of radical flux and instability that characterizes the point of immanent transformation of a universal thought in a Hegelian way as the fundamentally dynamic structure of action—not only logical action when the method of the Logic is at stake but also ethical and political, individual and collective and institutional actions when different acting subjects are taken into consideration. While from the position of immanence, that is, from within the "life in the interregnum" *stasis* seems (and indeed is) the opposite of the advancement, Hegel's dialectic suggests that it is only in the crisis's standstill (not in the recurs to external interventions) that we find the resources for the true advancement, that is, for an advancement that leads on to a truly novel position—a

new historical epoch, new forms of life, new ways of thinking and acting in the world. Only by living through the crisis and dwelling in it (with patience and courage, Hegel maintains) can we find a way out of it. It is herein, in the patience of this dwelling, that the work of philosophy takes place, turning *das Bekannte* into *das Erkannte*. My central claim has been that the interregnum is methodologically necessary for the true advancement of the ethical and political universal. Its crisis cannot be avoided. I have brought in different voices to show how the advancement in and through the crisis is made, how the creation and re-creation of the universal—the social, political, ethical universal—in and through the interregnum take place. Indeed, the interregnum is always with us as the necessary condition of all advancing action. And yet, to common sense (*das Bekannte*) the opposite seems rather the case: The crisis is lived as a stalling, demoralizing *impasse* where nothing seems to change. The predicament of crisis–stasis–interregnum is certainly with us today, constantly undermining with the despair it induces our response to current events, threatening to normalize those perverse symptoms of *stasis* that Thucydides so forcefully depicted, dangerously habituating us to the pathologies exposed by Gramsci. And yet, if there is a possibility of advance out of the crisis this possibility must be found within it. Herein lies the task of philosophy in times of crisis, namely, in helping us think through the interregnum thereby leading us out of it. This is the important practical, indeed political, lesson of Hegel’s dialectic-speculative Logic.

## Notes

- 1 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bände*, eds. Eva Moldenhauer and Hans M. Michel. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986) (henceforth TW), here TW 3, 18.
- 2 TW 3, 19 the “Preis eines vielfach verschlungenen Weges,”.
- 3 TW 7, 26.
- 4 If the process is crystallized and fixated for the sake of comprehension, we fall back to the logic of the understanding and we miss the target of the theory: the process is no longer there.
- 5 TW 3, 35: “Das Bekannte überhaupt ist darum, weil es *bekannt* ist, nicht *erkannt*,”.
- 6 See TW 7, 28.
- 7 Enz. §25 Anm.; TW 5, 49: in the *Phenomenology* Hegel has offered an “example” of the logical method “on a more concrete object, namely, consciousness.”
- 8 See Angelica Nuzzo, “Dialectic as Logic of Transformative Processes,” in Katerina Deligiorgi (ed.), *Hegel: New Directions*. (London: Acumen, 2006), 85–104.
- 9 TW 6, 548.
- 10 TW 6, 550f.
- 11 TW 6, 551.
- 12 It is “*Anfang des Fortgehens und der Entwicklung*,”: TW 6, 556.

- 13 TW 6, 555; see the corresponding passage on the relationship between *Anfang* and *Fortgang* in the introduction, TW 5, 71.
- 14 TW 6, 566.
- 15 TW 6, 557, 560f.
- 16 TW 3, 24.
- 17 TW 6, 557.
- 18 TW 6, 560.
- 19 TW 6, 557.
- 20 TW 6, 556.
- 21 TW 6, 558; 557.
- 22 TW 6, 561.
- 23 See TW 6, 557.
- 24 TW 6, 563.
- 25 TW 6, 569.
- 26 TW 6, 554.
- 27 TW 6, 304.
- 28 TW 6, 302.
- 29 See Plato, *Republic*, 470d: *stasis* “as it is commonly used” indicates “a *polis* that is internally divided.”
- 30 TW 3, 24.
- 31 Slavoj Žižek, *Violence*. (New York: Picador, 2008), 7.
- 32 Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni dal carcere*, ed. Valentino Gerratana. (Torin: Einaudi, 1975), Quaderno 14, 1932–33, 1727.
- 33 TW 3, 35. See discussion above.
- 34 Quaderno 3, 1930, §34.
- 35 *History* III. 81.1–2; 84.1.
- 36 *History* III. 81.2.
- 37 *History* III. 81.1.
- 38 See Jonathan J. Price, *Thucydides and Internal War*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 21f.
- 39 *History* III. 82.4.
- 40 *History* III. 82.4–5.
- 41 *History* III. 84.2–3.
- 42 *History* III. 82.7.
- 43 *Philosophy of Right* (=R) §135 Remark.
- 44 Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. and trans. Allen Wood. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), AA 4, 402f., 422.
- 45 See *History* III.82.2: war is “a rough teacher.”
- 46 Unless otherwise remarked, all the quotes in this section are from Gramsci’s Quaderno 3, 1930, §34.
- 47 Interestingly, in the Italian political vocabulary of the time, this is the core of *trasformismo*: governments remain the same by constantly changing on the surface, i.e., by constantly adapting to the needs of the moment without truly addressing them. *Trasformismo* is also a sign of lack of hegemony.
- 48 Antonio Gramsci, *Gli intellettuali e l’organizzazione della cultura*. (Tornio: Einaudi, 1966), 43.
- 49 See Gramsci, *Il materialismo storico e la filosofia di Benedetto Croce*. (Torino: Einaudi, 1966), 11.

## 4 Metaphysics and the Poverty of Liberal-Positivist Political Thought

*Eric Goodfield*

In the first half of the twentieth century, several philosophical and scientific movements led political scientists towards an acute resignation and rejection of all forms of epistemology, and ontology by extension, not strictly coherent with an empirical orientation. The founding of Anglo-American social sciences around the turn of the twentieth century took its lead from the likes of Moore and Russell and their empirical rebellion against Hegelian speculation. These leaders of the budding analytic movement had honed their ideas against the nineteenth century's engagement with philosophical reflection, the history of ideas and the relative importance of idealism in philosophy and politics that had made Hegel a figure of importance in the English-speaking academic world. Many of the doubts they originally expressed about Hegel would recirculate in later critiques of the prevailing orientation of political theory by major political scientists, such as Catlin and Easton in the twentieth century. For these empirically oriented political scientists, political theory remained mired in a subjectivism, historicism and idealism that was ultimately traceable to Hegel's discredited body of thought.

In this article I carry out two interlinked tasks. First, I lay out a critical history of what I consider to be the positivist methodological dogmas that continue to influence political thought as well as their roots in the soil of liberal democratic ideology. Second, I carry on to consider and demonstrate how these foundations have come to afflict contemporary understandings of Hegel's political thought insofar as it significantly relates to his metaphysics.

### 1. The Politics of Methodology: Positivism and the Schism of Political Theory and Philosophical Tradition

Political scientists have attempted to stipulate a technical language, a subject matter, and a discipline without the backing of general empirical theory. Lacking theory, the only grounds for such stipulations become existing practices and prejudices. The persistence of positivist political science can not be explained by its success in advancing knowledge,

but is probably best explained by its fit with technocratic tendencies of advanced monopoly capitalism.<sup>1</sup>

—Robert R. Albritton

In order to understand the transition from the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century revolutions in philosophy and the high instrumental and theoretical value that were placed on them by the founders of the social and political sciences, some degree of attention must be paid to the interaction between ideological and methodological means and ends. The methodological imperatives of positivism were given their more basic purpose by preexisting ideological ones. As brought out by Bernard Crick in 1964, conspicuous imperatives underwrote the call to scientific rigor. Of Merriam, Lasswell and the Chicago school he wrote,

The habitual confidence of their espousal of ‘democracy’, indeed the mere fact of their congregation in the United States, began to seem more important to me than their formal claim to be scientific . . . the methodology of these books seemed of little help in understanding their own obvious and intense democratic moralism: the presuppositions outweighed the propositions.<sup>2</sup>

In short, scientific methodologies, as well as ideological imperatives, were intertwined within the new science of politics movement, marrying the positivist revolt against idealism to the political interests of liberalism in an Anglo-American context. It is this admixture of empirical means and liberal ends that unifies the founders of the American Political Science Association and the subsequently highly influential Chicago school that tied together many of the central figures of twentieth-political science including Bentley, Merriam, Catlin, Lasswell, Tingsten, Almond, Truman, Kaplan, Easton and others who were pioneers in the methodological regimentation of the discipline of political science. What is critical for my narrative here is that philosophy had become political and an understanding that the methodologically and ideologically *prescriptive* forces that were behind this movement would have a direct and indelible impact on the way Hegel’s political thought would be received and appropriated in the latter half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first. With that said, I present a brief overview of three central actors in this process in order to isolate key methodological themes and their ideological linkages.

### *The Politics of Social Scientific Method*

#### *A. Charles Merriam*

The methodological regimentation of contemporary political science has its thickest roots in the soil of the 1920s’ science of politics movement.

At the forefront of this movement was Charles Merriam, who had inherited the mantle of leadership from Graham Wallas and Arthur Bentley in the 1920s. Like Harold Lasswell after him, there is a clear project within Merriam's arguments to establish a scientific foundation that would immunize political studies against authoritarian manipulation. As Bernard Crick, James Farr, David Ricci and others have all brought out, Anglo-American political science's project of scientization was intimately bound up with liberal democratic biases, seeking to root out the manipulation of political analysis so as to immunize it from illiberal use.<sup>3</sup> The hard sciences, in short, could provide iron-clad and tamper-proof methodological foundations on which political science could evolve, on the assumption that its findings and contributions would be inherently compatible with democratic and pluralist ideological principles.

So intense and optimistic was Merriam's commitment to ensuring a democratic landscape through scientific regimentation that he held out hopes of its resolving the fundamental problems of politics. Human nature itself he claimed seemed to "stand on the verge of definite measurement."<sup>4</sup> The goal of world and national peace he imagined as the potential fruit of a science of behavior where "the possibilities of training, education and reorganization" promised self-mastery to the end of "the cooperative enterprise of democracy."<sup>5</sup> The key methodological and political goals of such a program were based on the staunch belief that "social and political control may be found to be much more susceptible to human adaptation and reorganization than they now are."<sup>6</sup> In short, the scientific turn in American politics during the interwar years was implicitly a means of protecting democratic masses from themselves through the advent of a strict regimen of scientific research and control.

Where government had all too often proved to be a refuge for antiquated and irrational social impulses, imposing a scientific regimen promised not only that human technological organization would be firmly grounded but that the governance of those productive forces would itself be reined in as well. Where science never "turns its titanic forces over to a government of ignorance and prejudice, with laboratory science in the hands of jungle governors"<sup>7</sup> Merriam re-envisioned a Platonic kingdom of an empowered scientific elite.

In essence, science brings about the end of politics understood as strife and conflict and ushers in a technocracy of governance under the auspices of the conservation and canalization of human energies. So certain was this new scientific regime of control and peace in its confrontations with human nature that Merriam was willing to argue that "it has not been demonstrated that political behavior is any more complex than that of the atom."<sup>8</sup> Merriam's ambivalence with democracy is clearly on display here; on one hand, the dilemma of mass rule raises the question of mass irrationality to the fore. On the other, an elitist ideal of autocratic and paternal authority risked the erasure of the nature of modern society and its emphases on individual autonomy, enterprise and non-state

interference. Science would be the sure hand that could reign in the excesses of liberal democratic enterprise. The forces of modernization had so transformed politics and society that a “technique of government”<sup>9</sup> founded on a new basis required inauguration. Political science needed not merely to reflect and describe but also to actively contribute to these events as a partisan.

Merriam’s early efforts to bring methodological rigor into political science modeled on the natural sciences would be tremendously influential. As Farr notes,

[b]efore the Second World War, a number of Merriam’s colleagues and students—especially the imaginative and prolific Harold D. Lasswell—would join him in constructing and publicising a new science of politics that was enthusiastic about methods and realistic about democracy in the wake of the First World War. Their efforts would be continued well into the 1950s and 60s by their behavioral descendants.<sup>10</sup>

### *B. George Catlin*

One of Merriam’s colleagues and younger contemporaries was George Edward Gordon Catlin. Anticipating David Easton’s concerns, Catlin had asserted prior to and into the 1950s that political science had descended into a historicism which had rendered the subject neutral, observant and passive. The attempt to bring political studies to the status of a science remained an uphill battle where the “metaphysician dislikes its empiricism, the natural scientist suspects its human uncertainty, the historian abhors its attempt to theorise.”<sup>11</sup> Holding that political science “had a bad start,” he pushed for the transformation of the discipline to match subjects like chemistry in their use of “abstract hypotheses and of a scientific method.”<sup>12</sup> As Easton would later argue, where no science could found a standard set of parameters for the discipline, it was itself subject to the unending contests of the politics of the field, themselves a microcosm of the larger political world and its struggles. Against this relativistic whorl of subjectivist contestation at the heart of political science as he had come to know it, Catlin made his views clear: “[A] scientific method is necessary in the treatment of Politics.”<sup>13</sup>

His intention to remove and distance political science from its subject of research, such that “[p]olitics must view social phenomena externally,”<sup>14</sup> had a very important and practical goal. That is, and reproducing Merriam’s position, this political science must be a politics of control which methodologically washes out human bias and prejudice in order to evince “increased control, control of men over the hitherto alarmingly uncontrollable behavior of man.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, the removal of the so-called

anthropocentric dimension inevitably manifest in relativist, intuitionist and intentionalist approaches to political science must be exchanged for this higher order, "objective" approach.

Speaking in the language of the Enlightenment, Catlin saw in the normative and idiographic subfield of political theory the very worst of the methodological backwardness of political studies as a whole, where "men have been permitted to cast without challenge the rubbish of uncritical speculation and the burning oil of enthusiasm to fling the bodies of opponents and to sacrifice to strange idols."<sup>16</sup> While Easton was nowhere near as enthusiastic about the purified project of a positivist approach to politics, the key elements of Catlin's and Merriam's assaults on traditional political research and scholarly practice would be taken wholly on board.

### *C. David Easton*

With explicit reference to Catlin's contribution, David Easton argued that political theory was an essentially impoverished branch of political science which had neglected "systematic empirically-oriented theory"<sup>17</sup> dedicated to the study of political behavior. Political theory he argued would have to convert itself to an empirical orientation or see itself dismissed from the discipline as both untheoretical and unscientific. In his 1951 assault on political theory, "The Decline of Modern Political Theory," Easton took up largely where Catlin had left off, charging political theory with a degenerate antiquarianism. Easton early on made the point that he would later drive home in his work on American political science in 1956: The historicism of then-contemporary political theory had become backward-looking and had ceased to pursue its sole redeeming characteristic of normative theorization. In addition, where other fields made use of theory to bring scientific rigor and conceptual coherence to field research, political theory had made little contribution in this way. Political theory could not be taken seriously in terms of its factual claims until it began to reckon with "systematizing its empirical base."<sup>18</sup>

The conceptual systematization of political theory would become the basis for a new integration of empirical research and see it adopt a once-and-for-all empirical resolution to the great metaphysical and epistemological questions. The success of Easton's revolt is witnessed in Bernstein's commentary on larger Anglo-American intellectual trends of the day, where "the tradition of political and social philosophy had been broken."<sup>19</sup> Having surrendered its association with the great questions, political theory would thus be made conceptual handmaiden to Easton's scientific study of politics and the cross-fertilization of philosophical and political questions brought to an end.

Easton understood American political theory's descent into historicism in terms of the discipline's own normative passivity and conformity with tradition. In this way it had lost its critical capacity and had become an



unwitting rubber stamp and reinforcing institution to these values. While he may have permitted theory some normative leeway, for Easton it must be ultimately be held accountable to empirical criteria by which "[a]ll that we need demand of theoretical research is that in principle we are able to test it by reference to sensory data."<sup>20</sup> This, of course, is to assume that all theory may ultimately be empirically testable and that the political and social phenomenon that theorists apply themselves to is scrutable in this way.

Part of what had kept political science stagnant for Easton had been its implied challenge to power and establishment where its critical imagination should have presented an inherent challenge to the unifying myth of democracy. Yet his claim that there was no overarching conceptual framework within contemporary twentieth-century political thought remains conspicuous and conflicts with what others have witnessed as the post-1920s' American approach toward a positive political science.<sup>21</sup> In short, Easton failed to recognize that most members of the science of politics movement had envisioned the discipline as an instrument to higher ideological ends. Easton's own critique of the constraining influences of democratic and Western prejudices does not spare him from scrutiny. Despite his overt intentions he contributed to a methodological project that had been setup as a bulwark of liberal democratic values and institutions. Gunnel reinforces the point, representing Easton as the principal spokesperson of the behavioralist movement in political science, which was "less a revolution in many respects than a recommitment to the visions of both the scientific study of politics and liberal democracy that had informed the discipline for nearly a half century."<sup>22</sup>

These ideological cornerstones were taken for granted in Easton's extension of the science of politics movement even as he admonished the field precisely for taking American institutional values and norms for granted. While behavioralism in the 1950s and 1960s could not include most scholars as card carrying members, William Rose informs us that "a positivist undercurrent largely informed the dominant aspirations of the profession."<sup>23</sup>

Where the empirical thrust was not influential, the logical thread manifested itself in the trends of rational choice, mathematical modeling, game theory, linguistic analysis and, in general, quantitative and analytic approaches to methodology. The Vienna Circle was crucial in making verifiability a touchstone of intelligibility, Carl Hempel demarcating between statements "which have empirical content" from those "of transempirical metaphysics, which admit of none."<sup>24</sup> Thus, the very capacity to speak outside the confines of positivist and empirical logic presented a constraint that was powerfully influential for political science and theory such that it became the benchmark of intelligibility and sobriety. Within a few years of Easton's book, historian of political thought at Cambridge Peter Laslett declared political theory dead under the positivist shadow.<sup>25</sup>

*The Legacy and Persistence of Positivism: Scientific and Theoretical*

The initiation of the early twentieth-century positivist project in political science would weigh heavily on the future development and scientific regimentation of the discipline. Bernstein evades all equivocation on the matter: “[A]s philosophers of science became clearer about the primary characteristics of the natural sciences and the precise role that theory plays in them, they extended a powerful influence on methodologically sophisticated social scientists.”<sup>26</sup> This program coalesced with growing post–World War II skepticism regarding the certainty and stability of liberal democratic frameworks for the ongoing development of Western nations and their institutions.<sup>27</sup> The autonomy of the natural sciences from ideological commitment was the only way forward, not toward a doctrine of emancipation and enlightenment but toward technical and instrumental mastery. Politics had infected science with its aspirations and irrationalities, and this had to be beaten back in order to procure for politics a secure democratic bedrock it had proved unable to attain and secure for itself. With this Bernstein is able to declare of the social sciences of the mid-1970s—all the while looking back to the transformation that took place in the 1950s—that mainstream social scientists were those who were “convinced that the greatest success is to be found in emulating, modifying, and adapting techniques that have proven successful in our scientific understanding of nature.”<sup>28</sup>

The turn of the century Anglo-American struggle against idealism anticipated the wider revolt that would spread throughout its social sciences; G. E. Moore’s “Refutation of Idealism” had indeed been an uncanny trumpeting of a new age of intolerance of all forms of knowledge that did not adhere to the bookends of empirical and quantitative form. The installation of positivism in this way had a powerful and pervasive impact on the social sciences, in general, and political science, in particular. In this context the very capacity to speak outside the confines of empirical logic presented a constraint that was powerfully influential for political science and theory such that it became the benchmark of intelligibility and sobriety. Hegel’s work was thus under assault from multiple directions: both by those who took issue with his supposed illiberal commitments to the Prussian state as a precursor of the National Socialism and by those who found fault with his religious and metaphysical commitments that were assuredly ominous for their collectivist and illiberal orientations.

Later, and despite the decline of the science of politics movement with the onset of social strife and protest in the late 1960s, Easton’s 1969 confessional revision in favor of a “post-behavioral revolution” and the pervasive critique of positivism that had come to prominence in philosophy, the skeptical conclusions regarding the positivist paradigm “in

the philosophy of science had little subsequent impact on the principal discourse of social science.”<sup>29</sup> Gunnell commented in 1986 that few in contemporary political science overtly accepted the vulgar positivism that had infected the 1950s and 1960s but that “the basic ideas remain very much the same.”<sup>30</sup> Thus, the legacy of the behaviorist revolution has remained potent in the form of the residual methodological positivism that persisted after the former program’s collapse in the late 1960s. Further illustrating this inertia Lane has suggested as recently as 2008 that the variety of American political science associations generally contain “political philosophy as one isolated corner of a field which remains broadly proud of its positivist ancestry”<sup>31</sup> and that “the battles between positivism and anti-positivism may not yet be played out.”<sup>32</sup> Steinmetz’s 2005 comments reinforce this viewpoint reporting that, despite ongoing efforts by social theorists to surmount it, “the disciplines continue to experience a positivistic haunting.”<sup>33</sup>

It is precisely this lineage that has etiolated and deformed our capacity to appreciate, if not embrace, Hegel’s view of the relation of political thought to philosophical problems that stood prior to the construction of the modern social scientific edifice. For, regardless of whether we accept that Hegel is an uncritical and unapologetic metaphysician or a critical philosopher who seeks to rehabilitate the tradition in the wake of Kant, the very metaphysical questions that reside behind the edifice of science so crucial to Hegel’s work—and on which science itself depends for its claims and existence—have been obscured. As a result, Hegel’s primary concerns with the metaphysical tradition and his response to its inner contradictions could only seem perverse and unworldly to those on this side of the epistemological divide that James, G.E. Moore, Russell and others inaugurated for philosophy, and by extension, political science and theory.

As the next section explicates, the institutional and scholarly gravity of this movement, among contemporary philosophers as well as political theorists, was a driving force behind the emergence of revisionist readings of Hegel’s political thought. This would advance under the influence of the rancor that “the alienation of political theory in political science”<sup>34</sup> had brought about for controversial and contentious members of political theory’s canon, that is, for thinkers like Hegel who were fundamentally alien and anathema to the positivist program and its presuppositions in liberal democratic ideology.<sup>35</sup>

## 2. “With Friends Like These”: The Unfortunate Rehabilitation of Hegel’s Political Thought for Political Theory

Working in the face of a small minority of protesting voices,<sup>36</sup> the Anglo-American approach to Hegel has by and large held to several key positions

which deny the theoretical value of the interrelation of Hegel's political and metaphysical thought. As these and other authors have witnessed, the revolt against idealism gave birth to new paradigms of theorization in the early 20th century. The prescriptive move against metaphysics sounded by the likes of G. E. Moore, Rudolph Carnap and others trumpeting the theoretical prowess of positivism in its linguistic, logical and empiricist formats, called for an "elimination" of the metaphysical creed in a way that had direct relevance and reference to Hegel's legacy and ideas.<sup>37</sup> As examined earlier, these trends had a direct methodological and ideological influence on the foundation, development and institutional norms that have guided the modern, Anglo-American social sciences since at least the turn of the nineteenth century up to and until the present. As we turn to the case of Hegel's contemporary reception, it becomes evident that political theorists and philosophers have themselves been impacted by these trends in substantial ways.

In the following I economically and critically examine a range of influential contemporary commentators. Central attention is paid to the question of the nature and relation of Hegel's metaphysics, as they emerge from his two works on logic, and his politics as it is developed in the *Philosophy of Right*. The roots of Hegel's metaphysics in his *Logic* are recognized by John Burbidge:

Hegel can claim that what pure thought discovers [is] not only the logical principles underlying all our thinking . . . but also the metaphysical principles which make up whatever is. His objective logic takes the place of what previously had been called metaphysics.<sup>38</sup>

In this context, I interrogate the intellectual forces and climate that have demanded the division of these two aspects—the metaphysical and the political—against Hegel's view of their necessity and usefulness to one another. With special emphasis on Karl Popper's work that Bertrand Russell considered a "work of first-class importance which ought to be widely read for its masterly criticism of the enemies of democracy,"<sup>39</sup> the assault on Hegel's thought in the wake of the Second World War and the triumph of liberalism set off a series of defenses and counterattacks.

This debate, which continues to make itself felt today, unleashed the combined intellectual and moral resources of postwar liberal and scientific indignation. While Hegel's image as either an unabashed proto-Nazi Prussian statist or mystic prophet and harbinger of twentieth-century totalitarian collectivism has largely been dispatched, I argue that the stain and strain of the process of his defense have had an indelible and deforming impact on how we nowadays conceive of Hegel's political thought and its autonomous capacity to speak to us in the present.

*Origins of Anglophone Debate*

The assault on Hegel's political thought in the wake of the two world wars and the eventual triumph of liberalism in the West set off a series of scholarly attacks and counterattacks. We start in 1918 with the first major English-language critique of Hegel's metaphysical politics. A liberal politician and social theorist amid World War I, Leonard Trelawney Hobhouse assailed Hegel's conservative worldview in which "the lives of individuals are altogether subordinate to the state system and the cosmic order of things." Hobhouse warned his readers against taking Hegel as merely a "metaphysical dreamer" as this would be to miss his sinister support for the rise of German militarism. In his self-proclaimed "Englishman's" resentment of Hegel in the 1940s, British political commentator John Spender soon after argued that Hegel's metaphysics gave a "pseudo philosophical veneer to Machiavelli's justification of the unscrupulous use of fraud and force in the service of the State."<sup>40</sup> Here Hegel's collective vision of positive liberty in and through *Sittlichkeit* is reduced to no more than the "mischief" and "mystification" of an amoral, regressive and antiliberal political vision.

In the 1950s, Karl Popper's now-famous *The Open Society and Its Enemies* would crystallize and culminate this line of criticism. For Popper, Hegel the magician had pulled "physical rabbits out of purely metaphysical silk-hats."<sup>41</sup> Hegel's fantastic and magical jargon was the veil behind that modern totalitarianism concealed its raw will to power. Bertrand Russell hailed Popper's attack, proclaiming that his "analysis of Hegel is deadly" and seconded Popper in his *History of Western Philosophy*, asserting that Hegel's state "justifies every internal tyranny and every external aggression that can possibly be imagined."<sup>42</sup>

To sum this trend up, in 1954, the political thinker Carl Friedrich wrote that "[a]nyone who undertakes to deal with Hegel in pragmatic, positivist America today is running the risk of being immediately set down as a hopeless obscurantist" and that it "became the fashion to talk about Hegel as if he had practically written *Mein Kampf*."<sup>43</sup> In short, the scholarly influence of Hegel's political thought, already eliminated in Germany, was now effectively obliterated in much of the English-speaking world as well.

*Counterpoise*

In 1951, eleven years prior to this high tide for a trend which threw out the political baby with the metaphysical bathwater, a defensive counter-reaction began to take shape. Hegel's influence in much of the world through Marx, the Frankfurt school and existentialist thought in the context of the cold war lead to a reconsideration and recasting of his thought. As Bernstein would write a few years later "[i]f there is one philosopher

who had been thought to be dead and buried, who embodied all the vices of the wrong way of philosophizing, who seemed to have been killed off by abuse and ridicule, it was Hegel.”<sup>44</sup> Yet Hegel had returned during a period when ideological and ontological reconsiderations had emerged to challenge a variety of liberal and positivist biases. It is in this context, and the latter liberal crisis of communitarian critique, that Hegel scholarship and appreciation returned and proliferated in myriad forms and disciplines.

In 1951, Walter Kaufman’s “The Hegel Myth and its Method” sought to stem the tide of the trend of underestimating and debasing Hegel’s work, with specific reference to Popper’s work. Here Kaufmann assailed Popper’s propagandistic abuses, arguing that “one should protest against his method” that “is unfortunately similar to that of totalitarian “scholars”—and it appears to be spreading.”<sup>45</sup> In short, the “right-Hegelian” appropriation, and subsequent fixation of liberal criticism, on the latter half of Hegel’s doubled equation—that the actual is the rational—wholly mistook subsisting and empirical reality for the actual when, in fact, it cannot be so. This analysis is in conformity with Hegel’s own idealism, which distinguished the actual, as full realization of the rational ideal, from that which simply subsists or is in the process of actualization. Popper’s grave error, as of those of many of his peers, was to equate the actual with the real as we find it when no such implication is issued by Hegel’s maxim when read according to his own conceptual usage of *Wirklichkeit* (actuality).

Yet Kaufmann’s defense, for our purposes, began a process of selectively defending Hegelian positions; in this case the outer political consequences of a deeper dialectical relation which went unexamined in its relation to the former. For although Kaufmann persuasively undermined the assertions of the likes of Popper and Friedrich on the matter of authoritarian undertones in Hegel’s thought, he responded not at all to their claims of the essentially conservative implications of his logical dialectic. J.N. Findlay, who had argued a year earlier in his sympathetic 1958 reading of Hegel’s corpus that “[o]ur own Anglo-Saxon world . . . spent much of the opening years of this century in elaborately abandoning and disowning Hegelian positions we had previously held”<sup>46</sup> found it necessary, at the very same time, to assure his audience that “Hegel’s philosophy is one of the most anti-metaphysical of philosophical systems, one that *remains* most within the pale of ordinary experience.”<sup>47</sup>

What both Kaufmann’s and Findlay’s sympathetic readings of Hegel have in common, insofar as they both relate Hegel’s “ideas and language to our own time,”<sup>48</sup> is to truncate his corpus and system of thought, at times frenetically, in order to prune an understanding that could contend and withstand the twin pressures of liberalism and positivism that had already weighed down so heavily upon Hegel’s legacy.<sup>49</sup> This would hold

for a whole trend of sympathetic commentators as well who would assert a functional division between Hegel's political and logical thought.

Sidney Hook, who had come out strongly against Popper's reductionist reading,<sup>50</sup> conceded that, despite the "compatibility" of Hegel's politics and his logic, this did not mean that the latter were "therefore deducible from his metaphysics."<sup>51</sup> Perhaps even more telling was his need to assail the "fundamental ambiguity in that metaphysics"<sup>52</sup> as the basis of the regressive and statist elements of the *Philosophy of Right*. Here, and alongside the growth of the project to salvage Hegel's political thought, emerged a concomitant orientation to either dismiss or understate the value of Hegel's intent to wed politics to a logico-metaphysical foundation.

This trend of dismissive side glances to the issue of the relation of metaphysics and politics by authors sympathetic to Hegel's politics—to varying degrees—would take a significant turn with the publication of Malcolm Knox and Zbigniew Pelczyński's *Hegel's Political Writings* in 1964. In Pelczyński's introduction he made the case that here, for the first time, was an explicit Anglophone attempt to rehabilitate and initiate Hegel's political thought into the so-called modern canon where "Hegel's view [on freedom] can stand comparison with that assigned to them by many liberal thinkers of the age."<sup>53</sup> These authors set out not only to dispel the arguments of Haym and Popper but also to persuade those who have seen Hegel as outside of the "stream of Western European political theory," which favors "constitutionalism, democracy, and progress . . . how little substance there is in any such interpretation."<sup>54</sup>

This matter he explained was down to Hegel's metaphysics, which had overshadowed the other elements of thought and left them largely unexplored. In identifying the conservative curse cast on his politics as originating in his metaphysics, Pelczyński is lead to conclude that "Hegel could have kept his political theory quite distinct from his general philosophy."<sup>55</sup> It is this bisection that he set out to accomplish for Hegel's corpus, distinguishing between the metaphysical excesses of the *Philosophy of Right* and the earlier, non-metaphysical works of political theory that witness Hegel's sobriety, pragmatism and attention to empirical detail.

On this basis Pelczyński called for a clean disconnection of the political from the philosophical: "Hegel's political thought can be read, understood, and appreciated without having to come to terms with his metaphysics."<sup>56</sup> With the Pelczyński and Knox volume then, we have the first articulation of a project intent on purging Hegel's politics of its metaphysical presuppositions and the denial of either their necessity for its grounding or their usefulness for its comprehension. The rehabilitated vision of Hegel's political thought Pelczyński developed, Dickey and Nisbet have made clear, responded to this crisis by attempting to "make him appear a more liberal, rational, and mainstream political thinker than he has been taken to be in the past."<sup>57</sup> Against Pelczyński, I hold



that It is precisely not that Hegel's politics "ceases to have any practical significance,"<sup>58</sup> where metaphysics is involved but, rather, that the practical significances seem dark, dangerous and distant in light of our liberal-democratic and scientific commitments.

Five years subsequent to the Pelczyński and Knox translated collection, Dante Germino released his "Hegel as a Political Theorist" in *The Journal of Politics* in 1969. On the basis of the seeming distraction which Hegel's logical system implied for our gaining better access to his concrete political theory, Germino, overtly "in basic agreement"<sup>59</sup> with Pelczyński, reasserted and extended Pelczyński's proviso for our considerations of the *Philosophy of Right*: "Hegel's political thought . . . can be understood without constant reference to his total metaphysical system."<sup>60</sup> As a justification for his passing over the "metaphysical system," Germino informs us that Hegel was a "man of insight" whose vision should be examined independent of the assumption that he was a "prisoner of method."<sup>61</sup> With no further elaboration as to how or why this need be our approach, Germino progresses with the Knox-Pelczyński line of advancing Hegel as a respected member of the "great conversation"<sup>62</sup> of political theory who "deserves to be listed among the leading proponents of liberalism."<sup>63</sup>

But how can he come to this conclusion in the face of Hegel's comments in the preface to *The Philosophy of Right* that have been a bone of contention from the time of its writing for essentially all of his commentators? Unsurprisingly, the inevitable result is that, by putting Hegel's metaphysics completely out of view, we eliminate both the problem of interpreting Hegel's double dictum as well as the debate over the wider historicist context of the *Philosophy of Right* altogether. This is precisely what Germino's reading achieves. The slippery slope of detaching logical from political developments in Hegel's political thought here came to the point where the former's occlusion has transformed the understanding of the latter, thus permitting Germino's unequivocal call for an end to "the all-too-common practice of making [Hegel] a favorite whipping-boy through a fundamental distortion of his teaching as illiberal and "authoritarian" in the extreme."<sup>64</sup>

With the appearance of Shlomo Avineri's groundbreaking and influential Hegel's *Theory of the Modern State* in 1972, the question of the influence of Hegel's system for his politics no longer required so much as a comment. In this work there is only one significant reference to Hegel's logical thought in its 241 pages of text.<sup>65</sup> Avineri nonetheless provides us with a justification for this silence; if one were to consider it, one "may find himself immersed in an explication of the systematic edifice of Hegel's philosophy without ever reaching his political theory."<sup>66</sup>

Yet, and as emerged from my earlier analysis of Germino's declaration of Hegel's liberal credentials, this is clearly difficult to sustain. Our reading of Hegel's vision of political life and action should be, and has historically been, heavily informed precisely by how we read the overt



influences of his logical system and dialectic within it. Sidestepping these influences and traces, as if they weren't there, is simply to reify Pełczyński's approach. It also discloses a conspicuous trend among Anglo-American scholars that repeatedly emancipates a liberal Hegel from a discursive and historical legacy which has witnessed deep ideological ambiguity at the heart of Hegel's political thought.

This pragmatic attitude was soon after reasserted by Charles Taylor in 1979. Taylor takes Hegel's contemporary value to be reflected in his analysis and attempted resolution of the social and cultural crises of modern society and politics. While Taylor openly recognizes that Hegel took the *Logic* as absolutely necessary to his political thought, he parts with Hegel on its value for explaining and integrating the worlds of spirit, nature and mind. In arguing that if "Hegel's crucial proof in the *Logic* will not carry conviction today, and if this constitutes a refutation of his ontology, what interest can there be in studying his system?"<sup>67</sup> Taylor spoke in complete earnest in the preface to his 1975 *Hegel* when he informed his reader seeking understanding of Hegel's thoughts on politics, history and modernity that the section on the logic was "the most unrewarding" and that "they might skip this part."<sup>68</sup>

As with Taylor, Steven B. Smith did not seek to recast Hegel as a liberal in his 1989 *Hegel's Critique of Liberalism*. Yet, Smith too sought to resuscitate Hegel for contemporary thought and denies the primacy or even centrality of the logic for our appreciation of his politics where "viewing Hegel as 'first and foremost' a logician and speculative metaphysician . . . tends to isolate Hegel's philosophy proper from the rudimentary human and political concerns that were never far from its center."<sup>69</sup> While liberal commitments may not be behind Smith's intentions for dismissing a metaphysical appreciation of Hegel's politics, his sensitivity to secular methodology most certainly is.

Allen Wood's 1990 *Hegel's Ethical Thought* followed in Avineri's, Taylor's and Smith's footsteps. Seeing in Hegel's political thought the project of overcoming modern alienation, he mirrored elements of Taylor's expressivist and Smith's cultural hermeneutic interpretations. Despite recognizing the assumptions regarding Hegel harbored by "English-speaking philosophers," Wood is nonetheless remorseless in his dismissal of the speculative logic and its metaphysical implications citing Rosen's unequivocal rejection of Hegel's metaphysics: "What is living in the logic of Hegel?" is "Nothing."<sup>70</sup> Like Taylor, Wood's primary concern was to resuscitate Hegel to contemporary ends, not an idealist logician and metaphysical theorist but, rather, "a philosophical historian, a political and social theorist, a philosopher of our ethical concerns and cultural identity crises."<sup>71</sup>

What Taylor, Smith and Wood all share in common is a recognition of Hegel's ambivalent relation with liberal politics. They all come after the so-called line of "political interpretation" started by Pełczyński, and in

a sense they all are primarily concerned not merely with the way Hegel recapitulates fundamental liberal convictions, but with how he founds its modern criticism. What is important to recognize here is that with Taylor's and Wood's approach, a new and highly influential cultural line of the non-metaphysical interpretation was introduced that would run alongside the older Pełczyński reading and interact with it.

Mark Tunick's 1992 *Hegel's Political Philosophy* represents an updated collage of these dismissals. He spends a good deal of energy on the issue of Hegel's notion of retributive justice and its value for a critical understanding of the criminal justice system of his day. In addition to this, his prime areas of interest are Hegel's political concepts of freedom and right. Tunick makes his view of the dilemma of politics and metaphysics in Hegel's political thought very clear: "While Hegel's political philosophy is metaphysical, rehabilitated it can be political."<sup>72</sup> Tunick is forthright in admitting his "modern sensibility that rejects' Hegel's absolute idealism and metaphysical claims as 'unacceptable.'<sup>73</sup> Hegel here becomes captive to our political presuppositions, our needs and our biases, with Tunick admitting that "the Hegel [he] appropriate[s] is a non-foundationalist, non-metaphysical, that is, a rehabilitated Hegel."<sup>74</sup> Having set aside Hegel's dialectical metaphysics for a more tangible world of actors and agents, Tunick misses out on how the dialectic is not merely an impersonal scheme of action for Hegel, but reflects will, agency and subjectivity through the very act of our engaging in reason as a practice of dialectic. With Donald J. Maletz,

Tunick historicizes what is metaphysical or teleological in Hegel into social criticism freed of truth claims, and he prefers a Hegelianized Marx or an "existentialist" Hegel to Hegel himself . . . This point of view is more asserted than argued.<sup>75</sup>

Indeed, the ethical and ideological "preferences" that he asserts demand justifying argumentation. It is precisely this glaring absence in so many liberal-positivist appropriations of Hegel that exposes a sweeping resistance to plumbing the depths of the metaphysical and epistemological assumptions that their ethical and political judgments—and assertions—take for granted or conceal.

Following on this trend from Taylor to Tunick would come Michael Hardimon's *Hegel's Social Philosophy: The Project of Reconciliation* two years later in 1994. Akin to the cultural readings of Taylor and Wood, Hardimon's central focus is on Hegel's political response to the problem of modern alienation. Hardimon's book restates much the same repugnance with Hegel's theoretical context, seeking "to avoid using Hegel's technical vocabulary, to minimize reliance on his metaphysics, and to present his view in terms that we can understand."<sup>76</sup> A result of this approach in Hardimon's interpretation is to tease out aspects of Hegel

that seem attractive to us, in particular his insistence that Hegel's true intentions would have been best realized in a democratic political form.<sup>77</sup>

Paul Franco's 1999 *Hegel's Philosophy of Freedom* witnesses a break with the Taylor–Wood reading, seeing in Hegel's political thought a critical liberalism that seeks to marry and balance social goods with those individual. Like Wood and Hardimon, Franco sees in Hegel's civil society a social reconciliation of self and other. On these grounds he proclaims that Hegel is “largely successful in defending the modern, liberal social order on a basis that goes beyond liberalism”<sup>78</sup> based on an assessment of his political thought that takes freedom to be “the first, last, and in many respects *only* theme of Hegel's political philosophy.”<sup>79</sup> Unsurprisingly, and very much in the spirit of the liberal trend of interpretation initiated by Pelczyński in 1964, Franco dispatches with the systematic concerns Hegel had woven into the *Philosophy of Right*, declaring that “[m]uch of the argument of the *Philosophy of Right* is intelligible on its own and can be evaluated without reference to the logic.”<sup>80</sup> In the end, and wholly in line with most other theorists working in the liberal trend as well as Neuhouser's publication of the following year, this strategy repeatedly settled on a revised basis for the elaboration of right: “Its practical relevance to the understanding of liberal democracy at the end of the twentieth century.”<sup>81</sup>

This trend would continue apace with the publication of Fredrick Neuhouser's *Foundations of Hegel's Social Theory* in 2000. As with his predecessors, the goal of Neuhouser's book is to make Hegel accessible and intelligible to a contemporary readership. His central argument takes up the cause of the Hegel's valuation of reason and its necessity for the development of freedom. “What makes the rational social order rational?” for Hegel, he asks.<sup>82</sup> The answer is freedom, and the articulation of Hegel's foundation of freedom as the rational basis of the social order and its institutions is presented as his primary focus. At the outset, renewing Pelczyński's view vis-à-vis Hegel's system, Neuhouser suggests that it is possible “to understand his account of what makes the rational social order rational and to appreciate its force even while abstracting from those more fundamental doctrines” and that it “can be usefully explored in relative detachment from the rest of his philosophy.”<sup>83</sup> Thus, the paring down of our reading of Hegel's political thought is warranted to produce such a result, even though we “lack access” to the more basic rational foundations that permit freedom to emerge in the first place.<sup>84</sup>

His larger goals, as well, reproduce Pelczyński's early liberal apologetics. In seeking to salvage Hegel's legitimacy as a liberal thinker, Neuhouser witnesses only one substantial departure from the classical liberal tradition that he associates with theorists such as Locke and Rousseau. Where it is the case that Hegel makes one's class or station in civil society a conditioning and, by extension, a limiting principle for one's involvement in the politics of the state, he argues that this “is the *only* aspect

of Hegel's position that is unequivocally and irreconcilably at odds with the fundamental tenets of liberalism" and claims that "this unattractive and archaic doctrine is a relatively expendable part of Hegel's social theory."<sup>85</sup> In short, by withdrawing from the metaphysical and political tenets of Hegel's political thought, which are "jolting to our modern (liberal) ears,"<sup>86</sup> we are able to appropriate a "plausible," "compelling" and practical theory of politics from Hegel amenable to contemporary standards.

### 3. Conclusion

This overview sums up the latent yet ongoing complaint that is deeply woven into the liberal as well as cultural trends of English-speaking interpretation. The greater challenge for scholarship arises when such readings attribute these very views and intentions to Hegel himself<sup>87</sup> or leave Hegel altogether behind in highly selective and unreflective appropriations that generally fail to consider what value there may be behind his systematic and metaphysical intents in the first place. While the former represents a crisis for commentative scholarship, the latter seems to suggest a far more serious problem that goes beyond Hegel scholarship and speaks to proprietary liberal and positivist assumptions in contemporary Anglophone political thought and philosophy. For example, and witnessing Neuhaus, most informed commentators would find laughable any conceive of Hegel's metaphysics as in any way practicable to contemporary constitutional or legal frameworks. However, the same cannot be said for a consideration of our own presuppositions without which political assumptions, judgments and statements lose intelligibility, and normative force by extension, and become the outward restatement of positive convention and mere descriptions of precedent. Here, as Peter Steinberger has brought out, "the state is essentially a structure of intelligibility that embodies and renders authoritative a society's collective judgment about how things in the world really are."<sup>88</sup> Practical politics becomes the outlet for such "collective" metaphysical commitments where "ordinary political activity focuses largely on establishing and explicating one or another version of that [collective] understanding."<sup>89</sup> In short, Hegel's work should not first and foremost be taken as an invitation to dismiss his foundations in favor of our own but, rather, as an opportunity to explore and extend the intelligible depths of the latter with reference to political thinking.<sup>90</sup>

Too quickly have the two trends described in the preceding dispensed with the issue of justifiable and intelligible foundations, making consistent reference to the presumptions of present-day methodological and political norm. As a result, they miss out on the deeper project within which Hegel is crucially involved: the reconciliation of political problems with those metaphysical. On this charge, the liberal and cultural interpretations fail Hegel's thought by omitting consideration and elaboration of

the justificatory arguments for such projects, a demand that Hegel's political thought makes a central concern. Appeals to anti-foundationalist strategies for the reading of Hegel's thought are made almost exclusively in the name of the contemporary pillars of methodological positivism and postpositivism, on one hand, and pluralistic forms of liberalism, on the other, and lead one to question why these authors would choose Hegel, of all authors, as grist for their mills.

What concerns me at present is to bring attention to the essentially overdetermining result that this century-old and forceful trend has had. This procedure has taken the dismissal of Hegel's insistence on unity as a starting point and realized a revised body of Hegelian political thought. The result is a scholarship which has come to take the deformation and morbidity of Hegel's metaphysical presuppositions for granted, ultimately converting the prescriptive project against metaphysics into a descriptive one. That is, the prevailing proscription of Hegel's supposedly opaque metaphysics has led to its effective elimination from our representations and understandings of his political thought. The theoretical ramifications of such a remainder, for our thinking and not just for his, are substantial and the subject of another study.<sup>91</sup>

Where the "myth of the given"<sup>92</sup> had become part and parcel of the naïve positivist aspirations of philosophers of science and social scientists alike, there was little room for Hegel's metaphysical speculations. These related to the epistemological conditions for experience itself, conditions which the positivists' own empirical outlooks took for granted and which are most glaringly on display in the pioneering critique of the idealist legacy at the genesis of the analytical movement itself: G. E. Moore's "Refutation of Idealism." The challenge for contemporary readers of Hegel in a "post-behavioral" intellectual landscape, and that of political theory itself, is clear where "the persistence of the myth of the given and the instrumental interpretation of theory is now grounded in academic tradition, philosophical self-interest, and social scientific timidity."<sup>93</sup>

As a result there remains a need within political studies<sup>94</sup> to reconsider the way Hegel, and political thought by extension, has been received and read since at least the early twentieth century and how this trend continues to inform scholarship today. The task would be to consider how and to what degree this legacy has deformed the representation and reception of Hegel's political thought and impoverished our ability to appreciate his theoretical contribution as both a unique thinker and an exponent of the eclipsed and discredited prepositivist tradition of political philosophy. Sheldon Wolin's 1969 claims against methodism—that it had restricted "the 'reach' of theory by dwelling on facts which are selected by what are assumed to be the functional requisites of the existing paradigm"<sup>95</sup>—seems as valid today as it was in 1969 when it comes to matters of retrieving the value of the nonpositivist tradition of political thought for and by contemporary political theory.

## Notes

- 1 Robert R. Albritton, *Liberalism and Positivism: The Politics of Liberal Epistemology*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973), 178.
- 2 Bernard R. Crick, *The American Science of Politics: Its Origins and Conditions*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), v–vi.
- 3 James Farr, “The New Science of Politics,” in Richard Bellamy and Terence Ball (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Political Thought*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), [http://histories.cambridge.org/book?id=chol9780521563543\\_CHOL9780521563543](http://histories.cambridge.org/book?id=chol9780521563543_CHOL9780521563543). David M. Ricci, *The Tragedy of Political Science: Politics, Scholarship, and Democracy*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984).
- 4 Charles E. Merriam, “The Present State of the Study of Politics,” *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 15, no. 2 (1921): 181.
- 5 Ibid., 182.
- 6 Ibid., 184.
- 7 Charles Edward Merriam, *New Aspects of Politics*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1931), xi.
- 8 Ibid., xii.
- 9 Ibid., 6.
- 10 Farr, “The New Science of Politics,” 432.
- 11 George Edward Gordon Catlin, *The Science and Method of Politics*. (Hamden, CO: Archon Books, 1964), 94.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid., 96.
- 14 Ibid. 106.
- 15 Ibid. 107.
- 16 Ibid., 143.
- 17 David Easton, “The Decline of Modern Political Theory,” *The Journal of Politics* 13, no. 1 (1951): 51.
- 18 Ibid., 37.
- 19 R. J. Bernstein, *The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978), 6.
- 20 *The Political System: An Inquiry into the State of Political Science*, 1st ed. (New York: Knopf, 1953), 315.
- 21 Crick, *The American Science of Politics*, Farr in Bellamy and Ball, *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Political Thought*, Gunnel in George Thomas Kurian, *The Encyclopedia of Political Science*, 5 vols. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2011)., and others.
- 22 John Gunnel, “History of Political Science,” in George Thomas Kurian (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Political Science*, 5 vols. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2011), 1283.
- 23 William Rose, “Positivism and Its Critique,” in John T. Ishiyama and Marijke Breuning (eds.), *21st Century Political Science: A Reference Handbook*, 2 vols., 21st Century Reference Series. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2011), 464.
- 24 Carl G. Hempel, *Aspects of Scientific Explanation, and Other Essays in the Philosophy of Science*. (New York: Free Press, 1965), 3. in Lane, Bellamy and Ball, *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Political Thought*, 337.
- 25 Peter Laslett, *Philosophy, Politics and Society: A Collection*. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1956), vii.
- 26 Bernstein, *The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory*, 7.
- 27 Ibid., xi.
- 28 Ibid., xv.

- 29 John G. Gunnell, *Between Philosophy and Politics: The Alienation of Political Theory*. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986), 43.
- 30 Ibid., 45.
- 31 Lane in Bellamy and Ball, *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Political Thought*, 342.
- 32 Ibid. Reinforced in William Rose, "Positivism and Its Critique," 460.
- 33 George Steinmetz, *The Politics of Method in the Human Sciences: Positivism and Its Epistemological Others, Politics, History, and Culture*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 3.
- 34 Gunnell, *Between Philosophy and Politics*, 51–2.
- 35 Clearly the likes of Nietzsche and Heidegger have received similar scholarly treatment in some Anglo-American circles for generations and for similar reasons.
- 36 Matthew J. Smetona, *Hegel's Logical Comprehension of the Modern State*. (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013). Eric Goodfield, "The Sovereignty of the Metaphysical in Hegel's Philosophy of Right," *The Review of Metaphysics* 62, no. 4 (2009). Raymond Plant, *Hegel*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973). Henry S. Richardson, "The Logical Structure of Sittlichkeit," *Idealistic Studies*, vol. 19, no. 1 (1989). Stanley Rosen, *G. W. F. Hegel: An Introduction to the Science of Wisdom*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974); Peter J. Steinberger, *Logic and Politics: Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988); Robert Stern, *Hegel, Kant and the Structure of the Object*. (London: Routledge, 1990); Robert Stern, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Hegel and the Phenomenology of Spirit*, Routledge philosophy guidebooks. (London: Routledge, 2002); Robert Stern, *Hegelian Metaphysics*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Robert Bruce Ware, *Hegel: The Logic of Self-Consciousness and the Legacy of Subjective Freedom*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999)., Thom Brooks, *Hegel's Political Philosophy: A Systematic Reading of the Philosophy of Right*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).
- 37 G. E. Moore, "The Refutation of Idealism," *Mind*, vol. 12, no. 48 (1903): 433–53., Rudolf Carnap, "Oberwindung der Metaphysik durch logische Analyse der Sprache". *Erkenntnis* no. 2, (1932): 219–241. translation by A. Pap "The Elimination of Metaphysics through Logical Analysis of Language", in A.J. Ayer, *Logical Positivism*. (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1959): 60–81.
- 38 John W. Burbidge, *The Logic of Hegel's Logic: An Introduction*. (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2006), 14. For Hegel, it was with the onset of orthodox empiricism and skepticism in the modern era that the epistemological bond between the mind's idea and the object of its perception had been truly challenged. In this context, he disagreed with the common and widely held skeptical view of philosophy as a diseased science, and he took it upon himself to return thinking to a confidence in the ideal-realist unity and coherence of the thing and the thought on the grounds of the universal. With this Hegel asserted that "*Logic* thus coincides with *Metaphysics*" because both deal especially with the nature of thought and "expressing the essentialities of things." (Hegel, Brinkmann, and Dahlstrom, *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline. Part 1, Science of Logic*, §24). It is in this context of interpretation that Hegel considered the logical and metaphysical as a united and overlapping concern in his work. This project is, of course, carried out comprehensively in his two works of logic.
- 39 Grattan-Guinness, I. "Russell and Karl Popper: Their Personal Contacts," *Russell: The Journal of Bertrand Russell Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1, Article 3 (1992): 10.



- 40 T. M. Knox, "Hegel and Prussianism," *Philosophy*, vol. 15, no. 57 (1940): 219.
- 41 Karl R. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*. 2 vols. (London: Routledge, 1945), 25.
- 42 Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), 742.
- 43 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of Hegel*, ed. Carl J. Friedrich. (New York: McGraw-Hill Humanities, 1954), xiii.
- 44 Richard J. Bernstein, "Why Hegel Now?" *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 31, no. 1 (1977): 29.
- 45 Walter A. Kaufmann, "The Hegel Myth and Its Method," *Philosophical Review*, vol. 60, no. 4 (1951): 460.
- 46 John Niemeyer Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-Examination*, The Muirhead library of philosophy. (London; New York: George Allen & Unwin; Humanities Press, 1958), 18.
- 47 *Ibid.*, 348.
- 48 *Ibid.*, 18. Findlay, like Kaufmann after him, was explicitly wrestling with "deep-rooted, prevailing misconceptions . . . underived from anything Hegel says" (*Ibid.*, 19.).
- 49 For a consideration of the conjoined liberal and positivist aspects of political thought and science see Crick, *The American Science of Politics*, Bellamy, Richard and Terence Ball. "The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Political Thought," in *Cambridge Histories Online*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), Ricci, *The Tragedy of Political Science*, Goodfield, Eric Lee, Chapters 2 and 3 in *Hegel and the Metaphysical Frontiers of Political Theory*. (London: Routledge, 2014).
- 50 Sidney Hook, *New York Times*, "From Plato to Hegel to Marx," July 22, 1951.
- 51 Sidney Hook, *From Hegel to Marx: Studies in the Intellectual Development of Karl Marx*, Ann Arbor paperbacks for the study of communism and Marxism, AA66. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962), 19.
- 52 *Ibid.*
- 53 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Z. A. Pelczynski, *Hegel's Political Writings*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 68.
- 54 *Ibid.*, 134.
- 55 *Ibid.*
- 56 *Ibid.*
- 57 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Laurence Winant Dickey and Hugh Barr Nisbet, *G. W. F. Hegel—Political Writings*, Cambridge texts in the history of political thought. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). viii–ix.
- 58 Hegel and Pelczynski, *Hegel's Political Writings*, 135.
- 59 *Ibid.*
- 60 *Ibid.*
- 61 *Ibid.*
- 62 *Ibid.*, 886.
- 63 *Ibid.*, 905.
- 64 *Ibid.*, 911.
- 65 Shlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State*, Cambridge studies in the history and theory of politics. (London: Routledge, 1972), 221.
- 66 *Ibid.*, ix.
- 67 Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, Modern European philosophy. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 68.
- 68 Charles Taylor, *Hegel*. (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975), vii.



- 69 Steven B. Smith, *Hegel's Critique of Liberalism: Rights in Context*. (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1989). 11.
- 70 Michael Rosen in *ibid.*, 5.
- 71 *Ibid.*, 5–6.
- 72 *Ibid.*
- 73 *Ibid.*, 3.
- 74 *Ibid.*
- 75 Donald J. Maletz, "Hegel's Political Philosophy: Interpreting the Practice of Legal Punishment. By Mark Tunick. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992. 191p. \$35.00," *American Political Science Review*, 87, no. 2 (1993): 485–86.
- 76 Michael O. Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy: The Project of Reconciliation*, Modern European philosophy. (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 8.
- 77 *Ibid.*, 215.
- 78 Paul Franco, *Hegel's Philosophy of Freedom*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), x.
- 79 *Ibid.*, x.
- 80 *Ibid.*, 140.
- 81 *Ibid.*
- 82 Frederick Neuhouser, *Foundations of Hegel's Social Theory: Actualizing Freedom*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 4.
- 83 *Ibid.*
- 84 *Ibid.*, 4–5.
- 85 *Ibid.*, 205.
- 86 *Ibid.*, 215. The inclusion of the word "liberal" here is Neuhouser's own.
- 87 Tunick had the good sense to voluntarily resign from any such claim.
- 88 Peter J. Steinberger, *The idea of the state*, Contemporary political theory. (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 192.
- 89 *Ibid.*
- 90 An accurate and reflective understanding requires recognition that the metaphysical ideas in his work are part and parcel of his historical response to fundamental conceptual problems that problematize political thinking and that are the very preconditions of its richness and depth. To get Hegel right we must struggle to understand why metaphysical foundations matter, not merely for his political thought but for political thought in general.
- 91 Goodfield, *Hegel and the Metaphysical Frontiers of Political Theory*. This subject is given primary attention in chapters 4, 5 and 6.
- 92 Wilfrid Sellars's argument that positivist epistemology takes a mind-independent world for granted and as a given, without explaining the necessary conditions for that world and for minds within it.
- 93 Gunnell, *Between Philosophy and Politics*, 87.
- 94 Both within and beyond political science proper.
- 95 S. Wolin Sheldon, "Political Theory as a Vocation," *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 63, no. 4 (1969): 63.

Part II

# Ontology, Metaphysics and Practical Reason



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# 5 The Metaphysical Infrastructure of Hegel's Practical Philosophy

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## 1. Introduction

Our ideas about political modernity have been dominated, especially since the second half of the twentieth century, by the concepts and categories of liberalism. Political modernity is held to be a type of association among consenting equals who submit to a structured agreement of basic rules about the organization of the community. Principles of equality of opportunity, equal respect, toleration and a commitment to public reason are key attributes of this philosophical view. Liberalism is rooted in an ontological conception of the individual and society that sees the former category as constitutive of the latter: Individuals are held to be particular beings that commit to and constitute social forms. But in addition to this, liberalism holds to a decisive view about the concept of the “good” which must be subordinated to the concept of “right.” Accordingly, political life must hold to a basic ethical neutrality toward concepts of the good that are viewed as the concern of each individual. Since there can never be a fundamental agreement as to our concepts of the “good,” this argument holds, we can only commit ourselves as rational agents to a conception of “right” that secures for each of us the freedom to pursue our individual ideas about the good.<sup>1</sup>

Rawls, in particular, has been insistent that his concept of political liberalism and the basic structure that governs it has been able to meet the critiques laid out by Hegel against the social contract tradition. In particular, Rawls claims that he accounts for the “social nature of human beings,” and therefore, his reconstruction of liberalism “is a moral conception that provides an appropriate place for social values without sacrificing the freedom and integrity of the person.”<sup>2</sup> Rawls is responding here to Hegel’s critique that the social contract conception of political life simply reproduces the atomism of civil society (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*) and fails to be able to achieve a comprehensive reality of political life that Hegel articulates in his theory of the state. In many ways, we should see Hegel’s practical and political philosophy as a whole as a critique of liberalism—Rawls included—not because of the reasons that Rawls lays

out but because of a deeper problem that Hegel saw as missing many of the political theories of modernity in his own time. What Hegel wanted to achieve was a concept of a common good or more precisely a conception of the good as a feature of the community as a whole, one that would not violate either the condition of rational individuality or the condition of our essence as socially interdependent beings. In this sense, reading Hegel's practical philosophy through his metaphysics can help us gain some clarity on this thesis and weigh its importance with respect to modern ideas about political liberalism.

The idea of metaphysics that I am working with here holds that our social reality is constituted by structures and processes that are intelligible via their conceptual structure. For Hegel, logic and metaphysics are sublated, and rationality is not simply an abstract account of our propositions, as in nominalism, but, rather, is constitutive of actual structures of the objective world itself. If this is the case, then the application of Hegel's metaphysical ideas to the social and political world entails an understanding of the rational structures that constitute a modern, rational and free form of existence. According to this view, Hegel fits into a critical-metaphysical position where the relevant philosophical question probes the ways that our forms of life and self-understanding promote or constrain the potentialities that lay within our powers as human beings. What is ontological, in this sense, describes the kinds of being that emerge from the ways that we as human beings arrange and organize our social-structural relations (such as the core forms of ethical life) as well as the ends and purposes that we, as members of an interdependent community, help to create and that organize our activities. A rational form of life, a modern, free form of life would therefore be one where each of us as rational individuals is able to endorse the norms, practices and institutions of our social world but only insofar as these promote the highest good of our lives as interdependent beings.

What is ontological, in this sense, is not simply what exists objectively in the world but also that which is constituted by processes and relations that possess rational structures that we can grasp through thought. The ontological is a category of metaphysics insofar as we view it as a domain wherein these structures and processes have causal and constitutive powers over our lives and are capable of being grasped by thought and to be changed and to articulate higher, more developed forms of existence. If we see that this move constitutes the proper way to reconcile the subjective and objective then we can also extend this to an argument about the reconciliation of the fact–value split in social thought. If we can see that human existence also possesses these objective structures of existent—such as of relations, processes and purposes—then we can also see that Hegel is suggesting a richer conception of practical reasoning than liberalism. What Hegel is offering us is what I will call here a *metaphysical infrastructure* to our normative concepts; he sees that what is rational is

what is most relevant for our normative judgments about our being and the kinds of institutions and forms of life that we ought to see as valid and worthy of our endorsement as rational agents. In this way, Hegel's political philosophy and his metaphysics are deeply entwined forming a coherent whole capable of offering us an alternative paradigm for our most basic practical and political ideas.

One of the key elements of this metaphysical account that I am suggesting here is for us to move beyond the phenomenological and epistemic processes of recognition that has been the focus of many recent accounts of Hegel's practical reasoning. Hegel's ideas about recognition must be seen, in my view, as a kind of *entrée* into the ontological rather than the terminus or the desideratum for any ethical or cognitive claims. For one thing, the key here is once again to read the early phenomenological account of recognition from his early writings and culminating in the *Phänomenologie* through the more-developed ideas put forth in his *Logik*. If we take this route, then we find that the process of recognition is more about a movement from understanding to rationality concerning the *essential structure of human life*. For what Hegel is after here is a presuppositionless account of human sociality, one that we discover rationally via our phenomenological encounter with the other in such a way that subsequent structures of our sociality become revealed to us—the family, civil society and the state. But behind all these are objective structures and processes that account for and are constitutive of our existence as social beings. We discover these processes not through the *a priori* categories nor the deductive force of reasoning, but through a phenomenological interaction with the other. As such, we leave the phenomenological realm and enter into one where we must account rationally for the kinds of social-ontological facts that constitute our world, a space of reasons that take into account that those reasons grasp the ontological and metaphysical structures that undergird our sociality and the social forms that shape our interactions, practices and purposes. This is only achieved through a metaphysical grasp of the essential structures and processes that undergird our social lives. Indeed, the key defect of previous phases of human history, as Hegel sees the matter, was that they were unable to account rationally for these metaphysical structures; they were dirempted and alienated from the essential, constitutive structures and processes that constituted their social world.

All of this achieves an increasingly cognitive ballast as persons come to see themselves as constituent members not only of their own self-consciousness, but that this relation they share is shared by others, and that this constitutes a totality of social relations. This can be seen as the application of the basic ingredients of the concept from the *Science of Logic*. Indeed, it also gives metaphysical depth to the theory of freedom as being a self-conscious member of structures of reciprocal interaction rather than mechanistic or chemistic subject–object causation. They key

for Hegel, at all times, is the capacity to grasp truth-claims as congruent with process-claims. Reality, the true, *essential* structure of reality, is systemic and processual which means structures of relations in motion over time. This is something brought out early in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* but achieves fuller development in his project of sublating logic and metaphysics.

All of this means that the nature of human life is reciprocal, relational and universal. In this sense, there exists a metaphysical infrastructure to his account of practical reason since it relies not on abstract categories but on ontological forms of life that actively shape our world. But at the same time, these forms of life are ontological in the sense that they are not “brute facts,” following Anscombe’s terminology, but, rather, produced as social facts by us, by *Geist* itself. This is what makes the metaphysical account a powerful and, I think, essentially radical path. Hegel holds out the possibility not only for the transformation of those social forms but also for the idea that there is a standpoint for critique, for the capacity of the rational agent to call into question the merely existing reality for a better, more perfected one. Thus, social relations can be seen as having specified content only within specified forms: the family is what it is based on how the relations between its members are structured and regulated; these relations, in turn, and over time, processually shape and form its members. What is therefore crucial is that we see Hegel’s political-philosophical project as shaping a framework for a reconciliation of the individual and society, for a concept of the common good that not only has its intentional roots in each subject’s rational will but also has an ontology beyond the subject alone. Hegel’s metaphysics is therefore a crucial component to his practical philosophy and one that maintains its relevance in a self-described “post-metaphysical” age.

## 2. Metaphysics versus Post-Metaphysics

The non-metaphysical view of Hegel that has characterized much of Anglo-American scholarship in recent decades maintains that we can grasp Hegel’s political and practical ideas without the unnecessary weight of his speculative metaphysics. Allen Wood argues, for instance, that

the fact is rather that Hegel’s great achievements as a philosopher do not lie where he thought they did, in his system of speculative logic, but in quite a different realm, in his reflections on the social and spiritual predicament of modern western European culture.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, Mark Tunick urges us to rehabilitate Hegel’s thought without his metaphysics, seeing a fundamental divide between it and politics: “While Hegel’s political philosophy is metaphysical, rehabilitated it can be political.”<sup>4</sup> Frederick Neuhouser similarly wants to shear off Hegel’s



metaphysics from his insights into social and political thought: “I regard it as a testimony to the depth of Hegel’s philosophical achievement that his theory of *Sittlichkeit* can be shown to provide a compelling account of the rational social world independently of a prior commitment to his metaphysics.”<sup>5</sup>

A more developed perspective that has gained influence has been the idea of a post-metaphysics that understands modernity as circumscribed by the practices of an intersubjective exchange of reasons that is capable of creating rational norms and an objective criterion of validity in the features of rational agreement on norms. This discursive turn in practical philosophy has meant that Hegel can be seen as offering us a conception of rationality that is self-grounding and takes its shape through the sociality of our reason. One view of this is to hold that the subjective and the objective are to be united not through an account of the metaphysical structures that underwrite our social world but, rather, that the only rational ends we can see as valid are those that we can justify to one another. As Terry Pinkard puts the matter,

[t]hese ends should, that is, combine the *subjectivity* of the agent—his basic desires, wants and ideals—with the *objectivity* of justification—with what counts as a justification in the social practice defined by those ends—and that objectivity should be generated by “absolute knowing.”<sup>6</sup>

But this “absolute knowing,” according to Pinkard, is not a kind of cognition with metaphysical ballast—it is not, in other words, for him, cognition of *actual objective-ontological structures in the world*—rather, it entails rationally constructing a form of life based on our intentional, rational commitments to the projects and ends we formulate together and commit to as individuals. This is what counts as freedom, as Pinkard defends the thesis, freedom must be understood in the following way:

To say that one is free only to the extent that one is “at home with oneself” is thus to say that one is free when (1) what one does or thinks is intentional (such that one understands *what* one is doing), (2) what one does is characterized by a form of self-understanding (such that one knows *why* one is doing it), and (3) one rationally identifies one’s self with what one is doing or thinking such that one’s actions affirm one’s self-conception.<sup>7</sup>

This interpretation essentially dissolves Hegel’s ideas into a system of justificatory practices thereby eviscerating the need for any kind of metaphysical desiderata.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, if we examine Pinkard’s account we see that it is essentially formal in nature. It is clear that one could allow for features (1) through (3) that Pinkard points to without actually being free in

any meaningful sense. We can imagine people inhabiting a social system where they meet these three requirements and are nevertheless “unfree” in some objective sense. Those inhabiting a hierarchical religious order, a society with economic divisions of wealth and hierarchical roles of any kind may, and often do, exhibit these features, but why should we consider such social forms and roles worthy of our endorsement?<sup>9</sup> It seems that Pinkard’s interpretive criteria are missing something crucial here. Simply meeting these criteria cannot account for a truly modern, rational, objective concept of freedom or form of life.

The need for a metaphysical account is therefore not meant to take us back to a pre-critical standpoint, to some “eternal essence” or substance, or some natural substrate, but, rather, to see the categories of essence, substance, relations, reciprocity, process and so on as being constitutive of the way our lives are shaped. What the metaphysical can grant us is a rational-objective standpoint to be able to make critical judgments about the forms of life we inhabit and help to re-create. It provides a *content to what is merely formal* and lays the groundwork for a kind of practical reason with deep roots of meaning that grasp objective dimensions of our lives and are not simply constructed by our agreements and endorsed by our reflection. For if this latter account is the case, then there is no way to inoculate ourselves from defective forms of life since they may be able to rationalize themselves through the socialization of their members. Discursive forms of truth still require us to grasp the status of the ontology of the things about which we are discoursing. As Stanley Rosen has argued, “[a]ll attempts to separate discursive from ontological truth rest upon metaphysical doctrines about the accessibility or ontological status of the referents of the words we employ in constructing propositions.”<sup>10</sup> What is required, then, is a standpoint of critique from which we can make normative claims that possess social-ontological weight outside of merely attributing statuses to one another. For this very act of attributing and recognizing statuses as well as possessing normative commitments to others presupposes a specific shape that the ontology of our relations with others can take. This means that there is some kind of essential substance that constitutes our genus as human beings and that this substance can be worked into different forms and shapes—different kinds of totality. The relevant question is, “What shapes and forms are better capable to provide the context for our status as free persons?”

A similar issue can be raised with Robert Pippin’s account of Hegelian practical reason and freedom. Pippin correctly emphasizes the mutual dependence of agents on one another. The thesis of recognitive dependence means that we see ourselves as agents within a nexus of recognitive relations wherein each one of us acknowledges the status of the other as a free recognizer. Pippin importantly points to “an original relation of

dependence on others” that is crucial for the emergence of a kind of freedom that is achieved through recognitive relations. He continues:

At its most ambitiously dialectical the full claim is that acknowledging, acting in the light of, such relations of original dependence [are] a necessary condition for the achievement of true independence, or true “self-realization,” or “actualized,” “concrete” freedom (which Hegel typically calls the highest human good, the realization of what it is to be a human being.<sup>11</sup>

This is an important interpretive move. Pippin correctly emphasizes Hegel’s connection of an “original dependence” with the idea of self-realization and the human good. But he views this recognitive dependence as possessing no ontological or metaphysical weight, and he believes that this is the way we should see Hegel’s practical philosophy. As he sees the matter, it

involves a distinctly philosophical claim, a shift in our understanding of individuality, from viewing it as a kind of ultimate given to regarding it as a kind of achievement, and to regarding it as a normative status, not a fact of the matter, whether empirical or metaphysical.<sup>12</sup>

Why should we quarrel with what seems like a perfectly reasonable interpretive move? It seems clear that Pippin’s basic thrust is correct: We must see what Hegel is after in his conception of practical reason as a shift toward recognitive relations and toward a social understanding of our ethical concepts and ourselves as agents. But by shearing the metaphysical off from practical-phenomenological claims we are actually putting ourselves in a more precarious position. What modern agents discover through their recognition of others is not simply their status as recognizers—this, of course, is true—but they also come to realize that each of us belong to a structure of social relations and processes that have certain ends; as social beings, we belong to a nexus not of dependent relations that entail our independence but a sublation of these two poles into an *interdependent nexus of relations* that buttresses and structures our attribution of statuses, give us stakes in the social world we inhabit and force us to see that, as rational agents, we are more than simply connected to others in not only dependent relations of recognition, reason-exchange and status-attribution but also a *totality* of interdependent structures and processes that account for the specific nature of our given social reality. At this point, Hegel’s particular form of metaphysics has warrant because only through this lens can we grasp the structures, processes and purposes of the kinds of lives we have made for ourselves, and we can formulate critical judgments about these kinds of lives—about the institutions,

practices, values and so on—that constitute our ethical life most robustly when we ask about the ends toward which our social forms are oriented and therefore the purposes toward which we, as rational agents, orient our lives.<sup>13</sup> This is not an “external view” of the matter; it is an immanent standpoint where we see ourselves as beings constituted by the nexus of relations and processes that produce or articulate a social world that should be assessed along the lines of whether that world is a context within which the individual and collective Good is capable of being realized. Only then can we ask the question about what kinds of obligations and duties we might have as rational agents to the structures of ethical life that constitute us and which we constitute in turn.

What this means, as I endeavor to show, is that Hegel’s distinctive approach to practical reasoning *possesses a metaphysical infrastructure*, or an account of the social forms that shape a rational social world and toward which rational agents should owe their duties and obligations. Spirit is constitutive of the ways that we organize our social relations and institutions; it is constitutive of the social world, but it also congeals into objective structures that give shape and form to the processes and ends of our social world. The metaphysical infrastructure refers to the essential dimensions of this sociality; to the structures of relations and of mechanism, chemism, reciprocity; and so on that Hegel claims constitute the logical structure of all forms of being. This means that we are dealing with much more than a set of norms and a responsiveness to norms, and it is also more than a formal capacity for self-justification. It must be more than what Pippin seems to think it is, namely,

a norm-bound activity (one wants to get the right answer about what one ought to do), and the norms in question are not themselves simply “up to me”; they reflect social properties, already widely shared, properties functioning as individually inherited standards from such deliberation.<sup>14</sup>

The reason it must be more is that the norms of deliberation and the exchange of reasons cannot bear the weight of the kinds of practical concerns that Hegel, or we as moderns, have in view.

Hegel is after a much richer account of our sociality.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, the structures of ethical life that emerge achieve ontological priority once they come to have some degree of causal powers over us, once they come to have properties and dynamics that we constitute and that constitute us. We become free only when we are capable of justifying the relations, processes and purposes or ends toward which these social-ontological structures are arranged and oriented—and these should seek to provide for the universal, common good of its members and participants. We are free when we are cognizant of this, and when we can engage in an ethical life in which we rationally endorse the universal ends of the community since we, as individuals, are constituted by those ends and the

relations and processes that articulate them. We are not dealing here with a conception of metaphysics or ontology that is transcendental or beyond rational comprehension. Hegel's practical philosophy incorporates a critical metaphysics in that it seeks to grasp a kind of reality that cannot be explained through mere scientific reason nor from our deliberative practices alone.<sup>16</sup>

In short, as I see it, the problem with these non-metaphysical views is that they take us too far afield from what Hegel is after by viewing his political and social philosophy as bereft of his metaphysics. Any kind of rational justification requires some sense of what counts as rational, and this rationality must be more than the "objectivity of justification" that Pinkard points to; it must be able to grasp the logical structures of our existence. This is not incompatible with the fundamentally non-foundationalist, presuppositionless and self-grounding features of Hegel's philosophy that Pinkard and Pippin correctly highlight. Indeed, Hegel's critical metaphysics is not interested in positing any natural givenness to how we should live our lives, but it does seek to show us how we can secure claims about the Good that will enhance our freedom as agents—agents who will be able to make justifications not from the mere deliberative exchange of our reasons but by granting us the possibility of articulating reasons that will have a ground in the logical-rational structure of our lives as social beings. Since Hegel sees that there exist objective structures and processes that constitute human life, the metaphysical thesis that begins to emerge is one where we are able to give rational account of our practices, norms and institutions but also that these practices and norms are constitutive of social-ontological entities—structures of relational dependence with dynamic, processual logics that produce certain ends in the world—and that these should be the true object domain of our ethical reasoning. Indeed, it is this concern, I contend, that circumscribes the metaphysical infrastructure to Hegel's practical reasoning.

### **3. The Metaphysical Infrastructure**

If we take seriously the thesis that Hegel's practical philosophy possesses metaphysical ballast, that is, that it has at its core social-ontological concerns, then we must know what such terms mean in this context. As I argued earlier, Pippin's account of our social dependence on one another is a crucial starting point for any social-ontological account of our practical reason. Hegel's metaphysical ideas are not about justifications primarily but about explanation. As James Kreines has recently pointed out, Hegel's approach to metaphysics

is not at base epistemological; it is not, for example, about our practices of giving and asking for reasons in the sense of justifications for beliefs or actions. It is the metaphysical topic of the explanatory reasons why things do what they do, or are as they are.<sup>17</sup>

To this I must add that this kind of explanation is distinct from the empirical and descriptive powers of science; it is primarily about the grasping of objects of thought in their real totality, that is, as systemic entities that exist within a manifold of relations and temporality. Our capacity to achieve conceptual knowledge of the world is therefore a capacity to have in re cognitive grasp of such objects.

The basic thesis is that the structure of the concept becomes objectified in social and political life and that this structure is an *ontological structure*. By *ontological* I mean a special way of reasoning about social reality in which Being can progress into more rational phases of existence according to its ability to manifest the structure of its concept. This means that its rationality is dependent on the extent to which any particular agent is mediated by universality. The key here is that once what is *in itself* becomes *for itself*, this means a movement of awareness of the rational structure of that thing. When we apply this thesis to practical reason, we must consider the ways that what it means to be a person, a human agent, itself goes through these different stages of development based on the ways that members of any community construct their self-understanding rationally. Understanding the essential structures of human life therefore means comprehending the metaphysical structures that constitute that life. Our sociality is more than an exchange of reasons, of mutual recognition or whatever. It consists of structures of relations, dynamic processes, relations and ends that constitute any totality. As members of these structures, processes and so on, we are doing more than exchanging reasons; our practices, norms, concepts and so on form structures that shape our relations even as we shape and constitute those relations in turn. These structures of relations are what manifest themselves in ethical life: family, the corporation, the state and so on. As moderns, we are supposed to inquire into the rationality of those social-ontological forms of life, to be able to grasp them and to hold them up to the light of reason in order to see if they are worthy of our duties and our obligations. This, it seems to me, is what lies at the heart of the radicalness of Hegel's political theory since it holds open a critical space of reasons for the interrogation of our social forms and the ends and relations that they constitute. It thereby provides us with a ground for our obligation or dissent from the structures that make up our social world.

In this sense, a Hegelian social ontology not only is distinct from the pre-critical ontologies that Hegel criticized but also offers us more than the current analytical approach. In pre-critical social ontologies, the concept of truth was subordinate to theological doctrines that were themselves embedded in hierarchical institutions such as the Catholic Church.<sup>18</sup> But even with classical Greek metaphysics, the problem was that these doctrines—such as that laid out in Aristotle's *Politics*—held too closely to the idea that human, social ontology possessed a kind of natural form to which all categories of judgment were to be fixed.<sup>19</sup> A post-Kantian

conception of metaphysics had to take seriously the thesis that rational categories constitute both thoughts and reality, are in some basic sense “real,” but it also had to move beyond the contradictions that subjective Idealism evinced, namely, its inability to know things in themselves and their properties and mechanisms. Reason was therefore a property not only of the thinking subject but also of the structures of the world itself. This was not to be taken to mean that the empirical world was the object of investigation; rather, Hegel’s claim is that a critical ontology would be one where rational structures are realized in individual entities, that what philosophical speculation is to posit is not the explanation of any given empirical object but the ground that serves as the explanatory principle behind that given empirical object.<sup>20</sup> In this sense, an ontology of the social must consist of more than what empirically exists, and it must be distinct from what we think is “natural” about it. Crucially, as opposed to Hobbesian materialism and utilitarian atomism, Hegel’s metaphysics helps us grasp those properties of our being that exist but are nevertheless non-empirical. Social relations and social structures, as well as processes and purposes, all fall into this category in the sense that they possess ontological reality but not empirical existence, something Hegel helps us to reveal and to grasp. As Robert Stern notes, “[t]he idealist must therefore be prepared to treat this non-observable form of being as *real* in the way that the empiricist refuses to do, because the empiricist cannot allow such ‘ideal entities’ into his ontology.”<sup>21</sup>

But these “ideal entities,” as Stern calls them, do have ontological weight once we see that they inform the actually existing structures of ethical life that we inhabit. These therefore become truth-claims about the world rather than otherworldly speculation about transcendent substance or anything of that kind. Truth-claims in this sense take on a more critical meaning insofar as we are able to grasp social entities such as social relations and other institutional structures and inquire into what they do and whether these things are rational. And we can ask these questions because Hegel sees knowledge not simply as regulative but as constitutive of the world. Rational structures constitute the actual structures of the world and these are knowable by us as concept-users because the concept and the object share in the same cognizable structure. These structures are not, for us as spiritual beings, fixed and mechanistic. But they nevertheless possess certain properties, such as teleological causality, essential relations, mechanism and chemism and so on, that can be shaped in different ways in order to produce a social reality within which we as rational selves can feel at home. We are able, in other words, to gain insight into these structures of relations and of becoming and be able to act on them as agents rather than be passive receptors of them as objects.

This is achieved, Hegel seems to suggest, via the phenomenological process of recognition that leads us toward a series of stages from mere



understanding (*Verstand*) to rational comprehension (*Vernunft*) of the essential structure of human life. This consists in the ways that we as social-relational beings are also *processual* beings, which means that we are constituted by dynamics of change ties to relational structures that possess logics that can be grasped by conceptual thought. We come to realize that each of us is part of a structural totality that possesses not a natural, brute factual force but, rather, an ontological reality, that is, one that has the features of objectivity and comprehensionability and is prone to change and transformation based on our own practices, ideas and norms—for example, the very things that create and sustain social facts and social reality. Hence, we are dealing with a distinct kind of ontology: a *social ontology* that grants us the capacity to (1) grasp the rational structures of social reality and the kind of logics and systemic features they exhibit, as well as (2) provide for us the basis for critical-practical reason where ethical judgments can be made without sealing off the objective domain of the social world.

Where I would like to focus my attention is the thesis that a social ontology can be derived from Hegel's ideas in his *Logic*. These are not simply categories of thought, as non-metaphysical interpreters of Hegel have insisted. One of Hegel's primary criticisms of Kant's philosophy was the way that he sealed off subject from object in the form of the thing in itself. Kant held that reason was regulative of our experiences of the world, it organized these experiences into a knowable whole. But reason was isolated to the thinking subject, it was not a property of actual things.<sup>22</sup> In this sense, Hegel's metaphysical ideas give us ontological insight because they are able to show us how the things that are real can be judged and how things can exist without them having empirical features. A social ontology will therefore be one that reveals to us the rational structures that constitute social reality.

### 3.1. *Structures and Relations*

Hegel is clear that one of the core features of human life is our social relatedness to one another. In this sense, human beings inhabit a kind of life in which each is dependent on the other in some minimally basic sense. In many ways, this follows from the radical insights put forth by Rousseau and his critical account of the *volonté générale* and his thesis about the pathological consequences of social inequality. For Rousseau, the natural person was independent and without the need of others. This natural condition dissolves when civil society first emerges. According to Rousseau, this entails a degradation of the natural powers of humankind. Since the emergence of civil society was predicated on a hierarchical relation that emerged from the birth of social inequality,

as soon as one man needed the help of another, as soon as one man realized that it was useful for a single individual to have provisions

for two, equality disappeared, property was introduced, labor became necessary. Vast forests were transformed into smiling fields which had to be watered with men's sweat, and in which slavery and misery were soon seen to germinate and grow with the crops.<sup>23</sup>

In these dependent relations in civil society, we leave the sphere of *independence* and enter into *dependent* relations with others, and he saw this as a defective mode of sociality. Rousseau's solution to this dilemma is the *volonté générale*, an expanded form of reasoning that accounts for our status not as independent or dependent beings but, rather, as *interdependent* members of a cooperative life that has as its aim the maximization of the common good of the association as a whole and the personal good of each of its members.<sup>24</sup> We achieve this status once we are able to think in terms that are sufficiently *general*; when we are able to cognize ourselves as members of an interdependent association. The core of any modern form of freedom must therefore be a social kind of freedom where each of us endorses and thinks in terms of ourselves as socially interdependent beings. Our individual good and the common good are different valences of the same reality; each is meaningless without the other.

Hegel's ideas about our freedom as moderns has, I think, this Rousseauian concept of interdependence in view as well as an expanded conception of what it means to be a person, a free practical agent.<sup>25</sup> Hegel sees that relations are deeply constitutive of who we are as persons; he sees that relations function in all objects since the core idea he is after is to posit an understanding of truth as a totality, that is, as a system of relations that act in dynamic, processual fashion and constitute certain ends. He also sees that social relations are in re properties of human life, as well as the rational structure of things, in general. The first discussion of relations in the *Science of Logic*, for instance, appears in his treatment of the "essential relation" in the Doctrine of Essence. He shows that, within the move from essence to appearance to actuality, "essential relations" come to manifest themselves as a totality and the essential aspects of the object become active, or actual (*Wirklich*) once, through "absolute relations," there exists a total unity of the moments of the whole relating to themselves through reciprocity. Only once this is accomplished is the object about to move toward the realization of the concept, its true rational structure. The various aspects or moments of the whole come to cohere into a totality, one that manifests universal, essential principles for its individuality.

The concept of *relations* permeates Hegel's *Logic*, but it also manifests itself in his philosophical ideas about society and politics. In the structures of ethical life, we see the manifestation precisely of different structures of relations that take shape in modern society. Within each of these structural spheres is a logic of relations and motion of the moments of those totalities. These relational structures—as well as the processes

and purposes that they possess—are not simply normative statuses but, rather, also possess an ontological quality; they are real in an idealist (i.e., non-empirical) sense since they possess defining features as well as causal powers. Of course, the key insight here for Hegel is that social relations have always existed; they are constitutive of human life itself, but they have not always been objects of cognition for those participating in them and constituting them. The key here is an overcoming of the estrangement of these structures and to be able to grasp conceptually their objective existence, as well as the structures they take, the processes in which they are involved and the ends to which they are oriented and organized. I think this is a primary reason why we must be able to use Hegel's metaphysical ideas to gain deeper access to his ethical and political theory.

It is also true that these relations are not deduced from a set of a priori or naturalist metaphysical axioms. It seems clear that the means by which we come to cognizance of the ontology of our relations with others is through the process of recognition. But it can also be seen to manifest itself in the phenomenological aspects of consciousness: The ontology of our being as relational beings comes to the fore once the process of recognition has played itself out, that is, once we move from the mere recognition of not only the other as a recognizer but also the increasingly wider spheres of relations with which we come to see ourselves entwined.<sup>26</sup> In essence, what I come to grasp via the process of recognition is the idea that my recognitive relations with others are the precondition for my own self-awareness as a rational agent. The relation not only exists in some basic ontological sense; the core issue is that it is raised to consciousness, that each agent becomes self-consciously aware of the fact that our relations with others are constitutive of one another as rational selves.<sup>27</sup> Here the process of recognition can be seen as a gateway to this capacity to grasp the social-ontological features of our existence.<sup>28</sup> We come to see these relations no longer from the point of view of immediate experience but, rather, from a mediated vantage point where the concept can become cognized.<sup>29</sup> What is happening in the transition from the Doctrine of Essence to the Subjective Logic is not simply a move from the *in itself* to the *in and for itself*, but more interestingly, we become conceptually aware of the structures of relations that are constitutive of our social world and in which we participate and which act on us. Spirit, in this sense, finds itself to be not constructed, as is nature, of petrified relations and mechanical processes but, rather, as self-determined instead of other-determined in the sense that we become aware that these structures and processes of ethical life are rooted in us and our collective agency.<sup>30</sup> Mountains do not determine themselves, but we, as human beings, can. The relations that constitute mountains are not self-determined, but spirit is; once we grasp this we can see that we are not dealing with an ontology of matter or nature but a distinctly *social ontology*: a realization that our relations, processes and ends are not natural kinds but the result of

intentional expressions, practices and norms. However, it is also the case that we exist as relational beings and that lacking these relations with others, we would not be what and who we are. And Hegel's idea about how relations work and how they move toward a synthetic whole is an essential insight into the rational structure of society itself.

As in the move from essential to absolute relations in the *Logic*, so, too, can we see this as a metaphysical infrastructure to the ways that the ontology of the social itself operates. We move from seeing one another as analytic atoms acting on one another to a *structure of reciprocal relations* that constitutes a whole or totality that has purposes and ends. The important point to emphasize here is that reciprocity not only is a structure of dynamic relations but also has the power to constitute a new substance, a new ontological reality.<sup>31</sup> This occurs because the structure of relations that constitutes any substance moves increasingly toward new structural relations that articulate new forms of being. The key here is that Hegel is showing how relations become process, how they form into structures that actively relate to one another, and this constitutes the essential dynamic structure of the object. Key here also is the thesis that this is a *structure of necessity*, and as such, freedom is the expression of the self-determined self-realization of that object.<sup>32</sup> Things are free when they are capable of manifesting their concept, or what the specific structure of relations makes potential within it. The ontological now comes more sharply into view: Objects become what they are not because of some prior, existing substance realizing itself in the world but because of the immanent logic of relations that make things what they are. We now can see a more deflationary conception of metaphysics emerge, but one where Hegel is asking us to retain the concept of an end or purpose of objects. As Frederick Beiser argues, "[t]his reason or purpose does not exist as such prior to the thing but comes into existence only through it, embodying itself through the complete and full development of the thing."<sup>33</sup>

In this sense, relations form the first instance of what is constitutive of a social ontology: that is, of a comprehension of the substance that constitutes the social as a distinct object. We cannot reduce the social to its particular members, nor can we reduce it only to their relations or the norms and statuses that are recognized within those relations. The reason for this is that, as Hegel's metaphysical thesis begins to show, these relations and the structure of relations that constitute the object become *process*; they develop ontologically into something new once we see that there are contradictions within the plane of static relations. Relations must be sublated into *processes* and processes into *ends*—only in this way can we begin to grasp the metaphysical structure that undergirds Hegel's political and practical ideas. For if we are relational beings, if we belong to a social world, then this social world surely has its own ontological features. And if this is the case, then the kinds of practical reasons

we might use will be different from a defective view of our world that does not rely on that social ontology. It is for this reason that I think we must insist on Hegel's practical reason as possessing a metaphysical infrastructure insofar as the ontology of our relations, processes and social ends are real in a metaphysical sense.

It is in this way that we can conceive of our relations with others as ontological in nature: such relations possess logical features and causal powers that are *constitutive* of our being but which are also *constituted by* our practices. Part of what is interesting about an ontological view of the existence of any object is the way that Hegel sees higher phases of their reality at play through the development of these relations and their externalization and self-realization. These relations are not static; they constitute structures of interaction that have their own distinctive logics as governed by the concept (*Begriff*) that lead to the development of the object through the overcoming of its internal contradictions. The key issue here is that we see that relations undergo an ontological transformation that leads to a subsequent transformation and change in the object itself. For Hegel, we need to learn to think not only in relational terms, but in processual terms as well. For defective forms of consciousness, such as the understanding, fail to be able to grasp this basic fact—it is unable to grasp the world not only in relational but also in processual terms. Relations are not static but possess particular kinds of motion; they become processes. The Idea itself is process, and the Idea is truth—it is truth because the structure of reality, that is, the way things manifest in the world, accord themselves to the metaphysical principles that govern them.

### 3.2. *Dynamism and Process*

We can see, then, that *relata* and *relatum* do not exist in static form but give way to *process*: a logic of motion that structures the interaction of the different parts being related to one another. This is a crucial concern since it is Hegel's primary task to show that truth must be viewed as a systemic whole rather than as an accumulation of empirical facts or observations. Properties of a thing are not attributes of that thing; they are constitutive of that thing. The relations that these properties have with one another are dynamic and form a process—a process that forms a structure. It is this that for Hegel gets us to heart of the matter: for all true reality is process; it is the organization of the structure of that process that the concept also is, since, as Stanley Rosen puts it, “the concept is the cognitive structure of the whole.”<sup>34</sup> We can therefore see that the essence of any thing and its concept must be the same in that they both take on the same structure. The ontological dimension here is grasped when we use concepts—as opposed to mere “representations” (*Vorstellungen*)—that grant us access the constitutive systemic relations of any

object as a totality. Our concepts only achieve their status as concepts once they have been able to share the same structure of relations and processes as the essence of any object.

This is why Hegel sees the move from essence (*Wesen*) to actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) as being constituted by an increasingly complex transformation of its internal relations—relations that become increasingly absolute in nature; that is, they increasingly can be seen to cohere into a self-constituting system that does not rely or depend on external forces for their existence as coherent objects. The more mediated the relations become, the more the object can be seen to manifest its actuality, its true, active being. But the more an object manifests its concept, its rational principle that gives it its coherence, the more that the logic of its internal relations produces a totality from its various moments. This occurs because the relations between moments of the totality transform with respect to their interaction with one another. The idea of a *process* here is one where the moments of the whole increasingly become mediated by one another and move away from external causality toward reciprocal interaction with one another in order to produce a self-determining whole. This chemical process is not yet *for itself*; it is not yet at the phase of self-determination because, as Errol Harris notes, “[i]t becomes so only when the unity becomes an end or purpose, when the system of interacting substances and processes spontaneously maintains and reproduces itself by its own ebullition; that is, when the chemical process becomes organic metabolism.”<sup>35</sup> Only once this is achieved do the inner relations express themselves as outward reality—only then does essence become actuality. What is important to see here is that the ontology of process is posited as emerging from the logic of relations, from a dynamic interaction within the structure of the relation of moments within the object. The ontology here moves from merely a relational ontology toward a processual one, but all along, the mechanical process is, in fact, a defective conception of reality. In its understanding of the relation of parts where each is independent acting on the other, it fails to grasp the higher truth of any object: that of the interdependence of the parts producing an end.<sup>36</sup>

This metaphysical thesis is also traced in his discussion of mechanism and its movement toward teleology, toward an end (*Zweck*) or purpose. In mechanism, the objects in the process are external to one another, acting on one another as external forces.<sup>37</sup> Each part of the mechanism acts alone, indifferent to its relational structure with other parts as well as its relation to the whole. As such, Hegel sees mechanism as an ensemble of parts that are governed by relations that are other-determined and therefore not yet achieving self-determination and freedom.<sup>38</sup> Instead, each part of the mechanism acts on the other not through freedom, but through force (*Gewalt*) and, as such, are not self- but other-determined.<sup>39</sup> It is important to see that this is a consequence of the ways that the parts

relate to one another; it is an ontological phase of that must transition to a higher conceptual level since it falls into contradiction. The contradiction emerges when the parts of the mechanism see themselves as *independent* from one another when, in fact, they are *interdependent upon* one another.<sup>40</sup> This contradiction leads to the process of chemism. As Hegel puts it in the *Science of Logic*,

[t]he chemical is distinct from the mechanical object because the latter is a totality which is indifferent to determination; with the chemical object its determinateness, and hence relation to other and the way and manner of this relation, are part of its nature.<sup>41</sup>

In chemism, the parts relate to one another through their mutual affinities with one another, not as independent and against one another. As such, the relation and process have changed and the ontology of the parts have also changed: They now become interdependent and relate with one another through mutual affinity. In doing so, they transcend the chemical process and shift to a new phase, or level (*Stuf*) of being.<sup>42</sup> Through their mutual interaction as interdependent parts, they now manifest a concrete totality with an end or *telos* and, therefore, as a self-determining object: "These various processes, which have shown themselves to be necessary, are as many levels (*Stufen*) through which *externality* and *determinateness* have been sublated, whence the concept emerges as determined in and for itself and not by externality."<sup>43</sup>

It is for this reason that Hegel sees the movement from mechanism to chemism and finally to teleology as a movement of free, self-determination because it is only when we see that the mechanistic and chemical conceptions of the object are incomplete—that it requires further explanation for a complete rational comprehension of it—that the object is self-determined by the interdependent relations that have a purpose or end in view, even if this purpose is not made self-conscious, as in natural objects.<sup>44</sup> Teleology completes the object not because of some transcendental metaphysic of being but because to grasp the end toward which things are oriented we can grasp the highest cause of that object. The key thesis here is that the ontology of process implies a new form of causation, teleological causation.

### 3.3. *Ends and Purposes*

We now can see that the end (*Zweck*) is more than the summation of the previous processes and relations; it is *itself* a cause, and we can now see that teleological causation has plausibility but in a conceptual sense: Relations and processes do not simply act; they produce an end and the very processes and relations of any given object are what they are because of that end. It would be absurd to say that the particular processes inside



of a plant—say, of photosynthesis—simply interact with one another without an end state; these processes are what they are *because of the plant itself*, its need for energy and its independence as an object. Of course, one can conceptualize photosynthesis as a process and can analytically isolate certain chemical and molecular mechanisms. But these will not lead us to a conceptually rich and total grasp of the plant. Hence, Hegel's metaphysical ideas are not to be seen as pre-critical but, rather, as pushing beyond the reification of partial, analytic modes of reasoning to be able to show that wholes and totalities exist and that their parts possess dialectical relation to those wholes.<sup>45</sup> But even more, once we consider social facts and not-natural kinds, we must rely even more on the metaphysical to grasp society as an object with its own ontological features. If we do not do this, it seems to me that we are denying the full richness of what Hegel's philosophical system has to offer us.

For Hegel the end is an essential category since it is with the telos of any object that the concept achieves freedom and self-determination: "With the end (*Zweck*) the concept has entered free existence, a *being-for-itself* (*für-sich-seiende*) through the means of the *negation* of immediate objectivity."<sup>46</sup> This is in stark contrast to Kant who had argued that the very idea of a final cause (*nexus finalis*) was something that was supplied by our cognitive faculties and used to regulate our experience of objects in the world. But Hegel sees these features of cognition also as properties of objects in the world. Hence, teleology is an objective feature of objects. The logic of any given process leads us to the point where we see that the parts of that object entail an end to make them comprehensible. It requires that for any understanding of an object that we grasp that its concept is the complete processual structure of the object and that its end renders this complete processual structure comprehensible.<sup>47</sup> But this is not simply conceptual in subjective terms. It is also ontological insofar as the concept of the end of the object is part of its objective structure—the process of photosynthesis, for instance, grants life to the plant via transforming light into usable energy producing life. The end of the process is concrete, rational and objective. It is true that we can analytically break down and isolate the different mechanisms and processes of any object—a plant, an animal body, an economic or political system and so on—in order to seek to understand it. But Hegel shows that this is an insufficient view of the matter. Teleological causality is not to be posited *externally* onto the object as a category of thought, for this was the great error of pre-critical metaphysics: "The more that the teleological principle was linked with an *extra-worldly* understanding and insofar as it was also favored by piety, it seemed to be removed from the true investigation of nature which wants to know the properties of nature not as foreign to it but as *immanent determinations* and sees this kind of cognition a *concept* that is valid."<sup>48</sup>

Instead, we must come to grasp that "the end of any concept is its existence."<sup>49</sup> This means that the concept is not a transcendent category, but is



concretized through the processual development of the object. The fulfillment of any thing is driven forward by immanent processes that determine the particular object. These immanent processes are the universal realizing itself in the particular object.<sup>50</sup> Hence, photosynthesis is a universal process and is also infinite—that is, it exists as concept—and is realized through the particular plant; that is, it exists because of the universal (principles of photosynthesis) articulating itself in a specific individual way (say as grass) and is realized concretely in the particular blade of grass that I encounter empirically. But the cause of that blade of grass is not only this whole process; this process itself is defined by its sufficient end, its *telos* as grass. So the essence of the structure of teleology is not causality itself, since that is shown over and over again the Logic as being sublated into some form of reciprocity—a reciprocity that allows us to overcome efficient cause as the essential determinant of the object and instead see that it is the self-realization of the concept itself that is the *telos* of any thing.<sup>51</sup>

The end or *telos* of the object is the primary means through which we comprehend the object. The reason for this is that Hegel is reacting to what he sees to be the contradiction in Kantian subjective idealism, namely, its incapacity to provide us with a satisfying account for reason itself. If we see reason as regulative of our experience, as epistemology, and not as constitutive of the world itself, as ontology, then we will possess defective knowledge of the world; knowledge, rationality itself, will be on an insecure footing. We can only have rational knowledge at all by having rational knowledge of objects, and this requires that we have knowledge of them as a totality, as a whole, complete object. The end of any thing is the ultimate explanation of that object because it is the end that gives full meaning to the structures and processes that constitute that object. The end is the *explanans* that encompasses the entire totality of the object.<sup>52</sup> The end is not simply an ontological category; it also reaches over into the epistemic grasping of the object. The parts therefore obtain their meaning through the end itself. A heart pumps blood through an organism, but without understanding the purpose of that process and the processes to which it is linked—that is, life itself—there is no final explanation of hearts. Hence, the end or purpose of any object brings together the relations and processes that constitute the object. But this also entails a conception of the good that is tied to the end. Indeed, for Hegel, more in line with Plato on this point, the good is not simply something that is intentionally willed, it is also an objective feature of an object; it is the proper end toward which that thing strives to become. Hence, the good of an organism is bound up with the teleological activity that the various processes of the organism instantiate. “In all teleology,” writes Willem deVries, “there is at least implicit reference to the good. In intentional teleology this reference is itself intentional; intentional action aims at a subjectively valued end. In natural, objective teleology activity aims at the objective good of the organism.”<sup>53</sup>

Here we can glimpse the intersection of the metaphysical and the practical. The good for Hegel is not separate from the end that any process articulates. Rather, the good is what is made active by the subject in terms of the Idea. This means that there is a unity of theoretical and practical reason: to know the truth of any thing is also to know what makes it good. It also allows us to judge the defective (bad) forms of that thing since it does not fulfill or realize its potential truth.<sup>54</sup> The reason theoretical and practical reason unite is because Hegel sees them culminating in the structure of the syllogism, that is, in the form of thought and being that takes on the mediating structure of universality, particularity and individuality. The good is what is rational, ultimately, because the particular thing is mediated properly by the universal. The good is therefore embedded in, indeed, a part of, the concept of a completed, rational whole. Hegel sees the logical structure of the concept as bound up with necessity. The category of reciprocity entails necessity since in that structure of interaction each is both cause and effect and each part of the whole need one another. They interact with each other out of necessity, but not out of force, as in mechanism. As such, necessity implies freedom because reciprocal relations are absolute relations; each part is determined by the logic of the structure as a whole, not by anything external to the object and is thereby self-determined. "A necessity that is understood to be a necessity of the system with which something (or someone) is identical is precisely what counts as freedom: self-determination, as contrasted to external determination."<sup>55</sup> What this means is that the logical structure of the concept is also the ground for self-determination. Once a system has *its own ground in itself*, it is self-determining; as self-determining it is not only free, it is also rational, and its essence has become externalized and active.

#### **4. Interdependent Ethical Life and Rational Individuality**

Much of this heavy lifting may seem to have taken me far afield. But if we consider that the metaphysical categories of relations, processes and ends are constitutive not only of our ideas about the world, but also of the world itself, we can begin to grasp that Hegel has in view more to our "sociality" than the intersubjective exchange of reasons or recognitive relations. A thicker idea of the social now emerges where the social is significantly more than these intersubjective exchanges but is composed of institutions, structures and processes that are ontologically thicker than those relations alone. The weight of the social now becomes larger than any set of intersubjective relations; it enlarges into a distinct ontological entity of which I am a part. It means that the social as a whole possesses an ontology that is made up of relations and processes and can only be understood once we see that these relations and processes are not natural but rather guided and shaped by spirit, by the intentionality of its

members. This objective-ontological account that I explored earlier also has a subjective-agentic dimension to it. But this subjective dimension is only meaningful once we see that it is constituted by a kind of rational cognition that has been able to make sense of the essential rational structures that undergird social reality. Against the Kantian move of an epistemological account of the world, Hegel's metaphysical thesis is that we must see that our world—both natural and practical—possesses rational structures and processes that are constitutive of it. Since we saw earlier that the relations, processes and ends are crucial metaphysical structures we can therefore see them emerge in Hegel's description of modern social institutions such as the family, civil society and the state.

The basic thesis here is that we do not, nay, cannot, rationally comprehend ourselves as estranged objects, but that the transformation of our self-understanding must lead also to a transformation of self and action, indeed, of agency, of will itself. The key here is a move toward an expanded form of individuality that can only emerge once we absorb the metaphysical structure of the object into the cognitive structure of the subject. The self, too, then undergoes a process of change, an ontological development through different phases of being in the sense that it is increasingly able to achieve a higher, more rational comprehension of reality. This occurs, Hegel argues, through the increasing conceptual grasp of the good. Each of us moves from being mere formal bearers of rights to being active-intentional agents in the world. We begin to see the subject, as Michael Quante has shown, as an intentional subject, as *persons* who will concrete ends but not as particular subjects, but as individuals operating within the sphere of universality.<sup>56</sup> The rational person or ethical agent therefore is more than a participant in the good, he or she is also a constitutive member of it as well. The ontological forms of life—their structures, relations, processes and ends—are both a product of the rational agent's activity and will as well as the causal force shaping that will and activity. For Hegel, the community is a whole with its own *nisus*, just as any biological organism is as well. The truth of the concept of the social, its truth and good as a totality, is the actualization of those ends that correspond to its most essential category of social interdependence and the fundamental social-relatedness of human beings.

#### 4.1. *Interdependence and the Ontological Structures of Ethical Life*

Objective spirit is therefore an instantiation of the metaphysical structures of reason that Hegel explores in his logical investigations. As such, the question is not about a neat mapping of the metaphysical categories onto the empirical social forms. Rather, the key is to see that the metaphysical categories of the *Logik* emerge as social-ontological structures that can then be understood and judged based on the deep grammar of

those categories. In this way, the *Philosophy of Right* is an attempt, on one level, to demonstrate how the structures of modernity can be shown to bring us closer to the essential, substantial core of what it means to be a human being, that is, toward realizing in our self-consciousness our status as interdependent beings that cooperate for some good, some end. The metaphysical structures explored above are therefore constitutive of the kinds of social being that any given society might instantiate. At the center of the concept is the movement of the process from mechanism to chemism and on to its *telos*. At the core of this is the transformation (*Übergehen*) of structures of relations of the object from mechanistic to reciprocal relations. In human social existence, the essential substance of human life is shown to be our interdependence on one another. The more that this is brought to consciousness, the more that this interdependence becomes the very object of our individual will and the more rational (i.e., more universal) our social and ethical world becomes. But also, the more that this is brought to consciousness, we will be able to call into question the prevailing norms, practices and institutions that shape our relations with others; we will be able to use reason to bring about better, more ethically robust ideas about the ways we can organize the social-relational substance of our social world.<sup>57</sup> Freedom and progress now can be seen to have a concrete, objective dimension of existence and actuality.

The concept of freedom therefore is entwined with the capacity of an ethical agent to relate the current forms of life to those mediated by universality, to constantly remake the world in light of the structure of universality. This is stated by Hegel in the *Philosophy of Right* in a passage that is worth quoting in full:

But concrete freedom consists in this: that the personal individuality (*persönliche Einzelheit*) and its particular interests not only achieve their complete development and gain explicit recognition for their right—as they do in the sphere of the family and civil society—but, for one thing, they also pass over of their own accord into the interest of the Universal, and, for another thing, they know and will the universal. They even recognize it as their own substantive mind; they take it as their end and aim and are active in its pursuit. The result is that the Universal does not prevail or achieve completion except along with particular interests and through the cooperation of particular knowing and willing. And individuals likewise do not live as private persons for their own ends alone but in the very act of willing these they will the Universal in the light of the universal and their activity is consciously aimed at none but the universal end.<sup>58</sup>

This passage is important because it essentially lays out the conceptual, that is, syllogistic, formula for the kind of freedom that Hegel thinks constitutes the relation between individual and society. But it also highlights

the thesis that the rational, free, ethical agent seeks to act according to a space of reasons that structurally higher than mere interpersonal relations. The universal refers to those reasons that grasp the whole of the social totality, the common good, the *res publica* that can now be viewed as the ends toward which our essentially interdependent selves are oriented. We move beyond the mere interaction of agents and the pragmatic dimension of intersubjectivity and enter a space of reasons that is constitutive of the whole social reality. The free person acts according to a will that wills an end that is universal, and this means overcoming immediate particularity and instead pursuing ends that have in view the substance of the universal.

The universal is therefore a property not of the self but of the individual's relation to the society as a whole, and society possesses an ontological existence because it is an entity that has features beyond the mere aggregation of its members. Against thinkers like Hobbes, Locke and utilitarians, society is not a creation of the agreement of its members; it possesses features and logics of its own, an order that gives shape and meaning to the moments that constitute it.<sup>59</sup> Our interdependence with others is therefore one of the key logical structures that Hegel traces through the various structures of ethical life. He sees them as forms within which the substance of our essential interdependence is shaped and organized, and these are forms that we can, as free beings, reshape and restructure according to universal interests and ends. The more the individuals that make up these forms of life are able to cognize this essential substance, the more that it becomes the end of their activities and wills and the more that it shapes the purposeful activities of each rational subject. We therefore realize in our activities and ends the universal, and it thereby achieves objective reality in the world. It is no longer a regulative ideal but now becomes constitutive of our individuality and the social world we inhabit.

Hence, the *Philosophy of Right* seeks to outline how this implicit substance of our relations and the processes and ends of those relations can come to be the substance of concrete freedom. In the family, we see that this substantial content and this begins to express our "absolute essence":

The family has as its *immediate substantiality* of spirit its *feeling* of its own unity, *love* as its determination such that one has in view the self-consciousness of one's individuality within this unity as the absolute essence (*an und für sich seiender Wesentlichkeit*) of oneself and that one is in it not as an independent person but as a member.<sup>60</sup>

The family only exists as a system of relations that form a totality.<sup>61</sup> Members of the family also experience sensuous love for one another, but only as an "external embodiment of the ethical bond which can

only subsist exclusively in mutual (*gegenseitige*) love and support.”<sup>62</sup> The mutual and reciprocal relations of the family members are brought to ethical consciousness in modernity since previous iterations of the institution did not have the same reciprocal structure among individuals—say, as paterfamilias or patriarchal family forms—and were not aware that the purpose of the family was to serve both the aims of the family as a whole but as individuals conscious of this collective aim: “The ethical aspect of marriage consists in the parties’ consciousness of this unity as their substantive aim, and so in their love, trust and common sharing of their entire existence as individuals.”<sup>63</sup> The modern family therefore combines two principles of modern ethical life: the good of the relational structure of the members of the community and the good of the individual.<sup>64</sup>

In civil society this substance begins to lose its ethical character since individuals lapse into their particularity, de-linking their activities from the universal:

Substance, as spirit, abstracts itself in many *persons* (the family is only *one* person), in families or individuals (*Einzelne besondernd*), who exist independent and free, as private persons, loses its ethical character: for these persons as such have in their consciousness and as their end (*Zweck*) not the absolute unity, but their own particularity (*Besonderheit*) and narrow self-regard (*Fürsichsein*).<sup>65</sup>

As a result, the “system becomes atomistic”<sup>66</sup> and the relations between persons become characteristic of mechanism rather than that of chemism as was intimately achieved in the family. What these relations lose is their reciprocal character; they become atomistic when driven by particular needs. But this leads to a contradiction, for if this mechanistic logic were to play itself out, then the society would disintegrate: “Particularity by itself given free rein in every direction to satisfy its needs, accidental caprices, and subjective desires, destroys itself and its substantive concept in this process of gratification.”<sup>67</sup> Relations cease to be reciprocal and oriented toward a higher, more developed end, and society becomes a concatenation of particular selves.<sup>68</sup> These atomistic selves act upon one another not unlike parts of a mechanism in that they react against one another in the search for their particular interests and needs.

But this leads to a contradiction that is overcome within civil society itself. Since each can only obtain what he needs through work and each different need and skill creates a division of labor within the society, this mechanistic particularity begins to give way to the chemistic reciprocity of economic life: “In the particularity of needs the universal begins to shine through in the way that understanding creates differences in them

and thus causes an indefinite multiplication both of wants and of means for their different wants.”<sup>69</sup> In this way, a new structure of relations begins to evolve wherein interdependence becomes the mode of relations:

In the course of the actual attainment of selfish ends, an attainment determined by universality, there is formed a system of total interdependence (*ein System allseitiger Abhängigkeit*) wherein the subsistence, welfare, and legal status of one man is interwoven with the subsistence, welfare and rights of all.<sup>70</sup>

In this way, the narrow particularity of each member of the society passes over into the universal on its own because for each to realize his own welfare or need he must use the means that are themselves the cooperative, interdependent relations that connect his particular good with the good of the community:

This [particular] end is mediated through the universal which thus appears as a means to its realization so individuals can attain their ends only insofar as they themselves determine their intention, wants and activity in a universal way and make themselves members of this chain of social connections (*Glieder der Kette dieses Zusammenhangs machen*).<sup>71</sup>

The emergence of the division of labor is not a structure of recognition between persons, it is rather a social-ontological structure that evinces the metaphysical structures of relations and process that Hegel examined in his *Logic*. The importance Hegel finds in the interdependent and reciprocity of economic life leads to a richer, more intense interlocking of persons: “[T]his abstraction of one man’s skill and means of production from another’s completes and makes necessary everywhere the dependence of men on one another and their reciprocal relation (*Wechselbeziehung*) in the satisfaction of their other needs.”<sup>72</sup> Since the universal is the rational criteria needed to balance out the syllogism embedded in civil society, the increasing pressures from the force of particularity—that is, for the satisfaction of particular interests—threaten the interdependent structures of civil society. But the universal becomes particularized in the individual once the rational self is able to grasp these complex interdependencies as the substance of our social essence. The subject-object relation now enlarges in scope and a new framework for judgment now becomes possible. What is crucial is that although in civil society this becomes the case ontologically, it remains to be taken up conceptually by the subjects participating in them.<sup>73</sup> As such, there is an increasing need for the universal to mediate this particularity and give structure to individuality.



The liberal economy, which starts out with the arbitrary choices and desires of particular persons, therefore has to be mediated by the universal in order to make the particular beneficial for the public end:

This interest invokes freedom of trade and commerce against control from above; but the more blindly it sinks into self-seeking aims, the more it requires such control to bring it back to the universal. Control is also necessary to diminish the danger of upheavals arising from clashing interests and to abbreviate the period in which their tension should be eased through the working of a necessity of which they know nothing.<sup>74</sup>

Particularity, cultivated by anomic market forces and the division of labor, cannot hold together a cooperative working life on its own. This impulse within civil society can lead to defective social relations—for example, relations of dependence instead of interdependence—that entail the diminishment of its members rather than their cultivation as free persons: “This results in the dependence and distress of the class tied to work of that sort and these again entail inability to feel and enjoy the broader freedoms and especially the cultural benefits of civil society.”<sup>75</sup> But this occurs in civil society because the members of the association are not cognizant of the social structures in which they participate and on which they are dependent, nor are they cognizant of the purposes of these structures of interdependence. As such, they become *objects* rather than *subjects* of these structures and processes. Freedom can become concrete only when the members of these interdependent structures become conceptually aware of the logic of said structures and expand their agency and transform their practices as a result. They come to see themselves not as mere objects of these social structures and processes or as constructivist subjects of them but, rather, as participating in a reciprocal subject-object structure where they actively constitute and are constituted by these structures and processes. The key ethical moment is the rational awareness that this subject-object structure is to be the organized toward ends and a form of the good that, in enhancing that structure, those common relations and ends, that their own individuality is activated and realized. This, it seems to me, is the radical kernel inside of the moderate, social-democratic shell that is Hegel’s political philosophy.

So now the contradiction of civil society leads us to the need for the universal to posit itself as the end of our association with one another. The relations of interdependence that Hegel sees as the essential substance of human life is only raised to consciousness once it is realized that the contradictions of civil society, of the needs of the external state, defeat the higher end of the political community.<sup>76</sup> To say that this is the higher end of the community means that each of us finally comes to



realize through rational reflection via recognitive relations that our interdependence requires the maintenance of the whole since it is this whole that fortifies and develops its parts and vice versa. The interdependent chemism that is instantiated in the family and in civil society, which was merely *in itself* in those spheres of ethical life, now becomes *in and for itself*: “The state is absolutely *rational* (*an und für sich Vernünftige*) as the actuality of the substantial will which it possesses in the particular self-consciousness once that consciousness has been raised to consciousness of its universality.”<sup>77</sup> But the key issue is that these structures of ethical life, of objective spirit, can only attain rational form once the reciprocal interdependence that constitutes each sphere is cognized by each agent as constitutive of his freedom. Once this is grasped, the metaphysical can be located within the practical: for now, the ethical life of the community—its norms and practices—have an objective content with which to shape its self-understanding.

Ultimately, Hegel’s Idealism comes down to the individual’s rational capacity to cognize this sociality and to ratify it in some sense as valid because he sees its end as rational. It is according to the end (*Zweck*) that the relations and processes that produce it are to be judged since it is the end that, in effect, causes the relations and processes that produce it. The metaphysical account Hegel gives of teleological causality is crucial here because it asks the practical question, when applied to ethical and political affairs: What are the ends of the social structures, institutions and practices in which I participate and which constitute my world? The Good and the end of this association is therefore a common good—but a common good that is richer and more complex than pre-critical philosophy would have articulated it. Now the common good and common interest of modern society are made concrete in the world through our objectification of common ends that track our essence as social beings.

#### 4.2. *Synthetic Critical Judgments*

It seems clear now that Hegel’s conception of rational agency must be deeper and more expansive than recognitive or reason-exchange. It also becomes evident that now we have some kind of criteria for normative judgment. It is clear that these are means that allow for the conceptual grasp of the essence of ourselves as socially interdependent beings, but it is not constructed through the process of recognition. Rather, recognition is the phenomenological membrane through which the ontological can be grasped. Indeed, what is crucial for Hegel is that we see rational agency as a status that is achieved once we are able to incorporate the universal into our subjective self-consciousness, into an ethical individuality. In this sense, individuality is, as Christopher Yeomans has shown, “the activity that unifies by transforming the universal point of expression and the particular conditions.”<sup>78</sup> What is important here is the role that the

universal plays in mediating the particularity of the subject. The universal is not an abstraction, but, as the *Philosophy of Right* tirelessly tries to demonstrate, a concrete totality constituted by our essential determinants as members of a social whole or, put metaphysically, according to the relations, processes and ends of the social whole of which we are members.

As I tried to show earlier, the social-ontological structures that constitute modernity are premised not simply on an interdependent complex of social relations which themselves constitute the community as a whole, but also on rational agents that are capable of cognizing this as their reality, as the essential substance that constitutes their lives together with others. These agents not only possess a conceptual grasp of this reality; they also grasp that the structure of the concept—that is, of reason itself—is also to be the structure of the world into which they fit. In Hegel's logical terms, we are dealing with the question of "ethical substance." Recall that substance for Hegel is the unity of the Absolute and its external reflection.<sup>79</sup> What this means is that the subject must come to grasp the essential features of what it means to be a free person, that these essential features are already to be found *implicitly (an sich)* within the interdependent relations that ensconce our lives and that once this in itself of the objective relations and processes of the social are grasped conceptually by us, we will therefore achieve the status of being free because now we have ethical rationality: We are able to know ourselves as cooperative, interdependent beings and that the reality of this reciprocal interdependence congeals into ontological structures of life that can be judged according to how those relations are shaped and structured and toward what ends they are oriented.

All of this further entails that the structures of the logic such as process and teleological causality take on a renewed and more important role when it comes to practical reason. We can say that the structure of the rational will is such that the Good can only be realized once the rationality of the totality is realized in the world, in actuality. Hegel's own thesis seems to be that the Good works in a reverse relationship to cognition: Whereas cognition works from the subject to the object, the Good is what moves from the subject to the object. It is therefore a feature of the will but has no specified content. The reason for this is that the rationality of any object is dependent on its Idea (*Idee*) that is, on the fact that the process and the end are sublated and brought to a higher sphere of development.<sup>80</sup> In practical terms, this means that the substance of ethical life, the essential, deep grammar of human life, is our interdependence that, as structure of relations and as process, has as its end the good both of the subject and the totality; it is the realization that the objective, common good is the full and complete realization of what is rational and implicit within the subjective, rational will (*Wille*). The political moment here is clear: since we possess an essence as socially interdependent members of

a social totality, the ends of that totality should be good for all its members individually and collectively. And since this good is something that is immanent within us it follows that the more we are able to organize our social-relational life and the social-ontological structures to which they give rise, we can judge the goodness of any social form and the norms and practices that constitute it and that it constitutes in terms of how it realizes a social context of a cooperative interdependence that allows for the articulation of rational individuality. The tension between the collective elements of the social and the concept of the individual begins to erode. Indeed, this difference between these two entities becomes sublated in the actions and purposes of each rational agent. Whenever we allow particularity to have dominance over universality, the common good deteriorates; The particularist ends of our collective efforts actually do damage to the relations and processes that give shape to our social reality. But freedom needs to secure the opposite of this scenario: It must secure common goods over particularist ones, and it can do this only once rational individuals will this universal. Hence, Hegel argues in the introduction to the *Philosophy of Right*: “The absolute determination or, if you like, the absolute impulse of free Spirit is to make its freedom its object” and in doing so, “spirit’s purpose is to make explicit (*für sich*) as Idea what the will is implicitly (*an sich*).”<sup>81</sup>

Now we can see how the expanded model of the subject that Hegel constructs in the *Philosophy of Right* relates to the social-ontological structures of ethical life. For ethical life to instantiate objective freedom, that is, the manifold for the subject’s own freedom, each member of the social totality must act according to the universal, must rationally will according to a space of reasons imbued by universality. And Hegel’s account of ethical life shows us, too, that it is the social interdependence of each on the other that needs to constitute the ground for that universality, for only rational agents that have learned this via the recognition of it as the ground of their own freedom will come to will in accordance with it. There is no reification of any given set of social relations—indeed, Hegel is emphatic that the Good can never be wholly realized in practical affairs.<sup>82</sup> Spirit is always made and remade not according to some pre-formed paradigm or plan, nor is it to be understood in relation to nature or natural processes. Hegel’s thesis is that the social totality possesses ontological features that are non-reducible to natural forms: relations, interrelations, activities, and purposes that possess their own logic and their own form of existence. The key, crucial concern is how to know which structures of relations, which ends of any given social system, are Good in any objective sense. And perhaps equally important, what social forms, institutions, and purposes ought to command my obligations and duties as a member of such social forms? Here we find that the move from the arbitrary will (*Willkür*) to that of the rational will (*Wille*) is effected by its taking on the structure of the concept, that is, by allowing one’s particularity to mediated by

universality thereby making decisions as a rational individual, a *person*.<sup>83</sup> Under the auspices of the arbitrary will, particularity strays too far from subjectivity and ceases to be rational. Consequently, one's individuality begins to dissolve into impulse and immediacy of choice. The key issue here is what does the universal mean in this context? It cannot be an abstraction, since this is precisely the critique Hegel levels against Kant. It has to be that this universal in practical affairs refers to something, to some kind of substantive feature in the world.

We can call the kind of ethical judgments that Hegel is pointing to *synthetic critical judgments*. What I denote by this term is a kind of practical reasoning that is non-constructivist in the sense that it takes as a ground the ontological structures of our sociality as a basic grammar of our practical ideas. It means that the kinds of norms and institutions to which we belong, that our practices and activities create and re-create, must be understood not only with respect to the relations we have with others but also with the ends that these relations produce and that recursively define said relations. What I am here calling the *metaphysical infrastructure* of Hegelian practical reasoning does therefore not entail a concrete set of institutional forms for the good life. Rather, it is concerned with a specific way of thinking about practical affairs—a way of thinking that connects reflective powers of endorsement and obligation with those structures, practices and institutions that are able to realize a good that is common, that is, rational, that makes explicit (*für sich*) the good of the totality. The good is also not a regulative idea but a *constitutive* idea, that is, a concept that seeks to be realized in the world and that can be known as a cognitive object.<sup>84</sup> This is because thinking (rationally) is not only a reflection on the social, it is the constitution of the social as well. This means that thinking and acting according to the concept—that is, according to the interrelation of universality, individuality and particularity, as a *person* in the fullest sense—is an *ontologically constitutive activity*.<sup>85</sup>

#### 4.3. Criteria for a Critical Practical Reason

But this constitutive activity is rooted in each member of the totality. Each person, as Hegel sees it, must will the good as a rational end because each cognitively grasps that he or she is part of this larger fabric of relations and processes that instantiate the good life, a flourishing form of self-realization that is only possible within the context of a social interrelatedness that enriches our individuality and that our rational individuality enriches and sustains in turn. What this means is that the ontology of the social is something that we come to grasp as individuals because the process of recognition grants us cognitive grasp of these ontological relations and processes. When the thesis of the “I that is the We and the We that is the I” is brought to its concrete and practical conclusion, it entails acting and willing within the conceptual sphere of an interdependent totality,

a social-relational nexus that has ontological weight in the sense that it has causal powers over the development of each member of that nexus. The criteria for political judgment now can be seen to emerge with the ways that the various social forms, norms, institutions and so on, that pervade the community to which I belong manifest the fulfillment of this nexus of relations, process and ends.<sup>86</sup> In the rational community, each of us wills the common good because each of us is able now to see that our particular good is a function of that common good of the social whole, and each of us now realizes that the good can be made concrete and real in the world only through our individual actions and willing.<sup>87</sup> This mediation of the particular by the universal grants our individuality more weight, bringing out the fullness of the concept and expanding our freedom, not as arbitrary, particular selves but as social selves, as ethical agents within an expanded scope of personal activity and social-political awareness.<sup>88</sup> We have overcome the narrow confines of liberalism to see that the Good is more than a personally constructed particular and instead ensconces a broader set of concerns where we view ourselves as interdependent members of a cooperative totality. We construct the social ontology of the good but only by restructuring and reorienting the metaphysical structures of our social essence.

The necessary ingredients for a critical-practical reason can therefore be seen to exist within the metaphysical infrastructure that Hegel lays out for his social and political theory. The central idea here is the connection of the individual to the community via the concept of the universal. But this universal is not an empty formalism; otherwise, we would be back with the categorical imperative of Kant. The metaphysical infrastructure that Hegel reads into practical reasoning entails that we overcome the chasm between “is” and “ought” through a synthetic reasoning that merges the *truth-claims* about human social life (i.e., our thick interdependence on one another) and the *normative claims* about the good that is enlarged and attained only through the specific kind of structure that unites the universal and particular moments into a higher, more developed whole. This means that the relations, processes and ends of the community be seen as rational once they take on the structure of the concept, that is, once they are able to make active and concrete in the world the most developed potentiality that lies implicit within us as a social species. Spirit is therefore ontologically constitutive of the shapes and forms of life we inhabit, create and re-create. The shapes and forms our social relations take, the processes and ends of our collective efforts and practices must therefore be judged based on the extent to which they are able to manifest the fullest form of self-realization as self-conscious individuals—as individuals aware of our substance as social-relational beings.

Ultimately what makes this kind of reasoning critical is that it is able to posit an ontology of value and the good that has its ground in the determinants of who we are as human beings. This does not mean that

we reify any given social system or set of institutions, or whatever. What it does mean is that the only way that the good can have a rational, concrete expression is through the development of the system of our social relations to higher expressions of interdependence. Critique is activated when this dialectical process is stalled and the relations, processes and ends of the social totality are no longer capable of serving the good of the system as a whole. The key here is that the burden for the maintenance of this social system is on the rational individual—all the relations of recognition and the institutions of ethical life and objective spirit need to be viewed and understood as maintained by each rational agent, and those systems must also work to produce the cognition of the universal and the good as the only rational, desirable aim of each member of the community. The good is not an abstraction, but a property of the ends that are able to realize the essential substance of any thing.

## 5. Conclusion

If the thesis I have presented here is even conditionally accepted, then we can see that Hegel has a much richer, more radical paradigm of practical reasoning to offer us. Since his metaphysics is an attempt to see the world as composed of systems, processes and relations, and that the ends of those processes and systems are what have ultimate meaning for us in the world, we can dispense with the idea that his project embraced some form of abstract claims about the nature of the state, of the community and so on. What Hegel offers us is a very different way to think about modernity and modern ethical life: one that emphasizes our social-relational essence and the kinds of ends that the society to which we belong are oriented. This perspective also asks us to consider the grounds for our political obligation. For once we see the metaphysical infrastructure to our normative and descriptive accounts of our social world, we are now forced to ask about the ends that those institutions serve and we now have a criterion for their rationality. Those social norms, practices and institutions that do not constitute common goods, that are not mediated by universality are to be seen as defective, as part of a *Verstandesstaat*. Perhaps for this reason alone the link between Hegel's metaphysical project and his political and practical philosophy should be seen as interlaced at every level and that philosophical reflection can obtain some strength in the face a relentless, constricting realism that threatens to foreclose the possibility of a more compelling, more rational expression of the human community.

## Notes

- 1 See the important discussions on this theme by John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 174ff. as well as Charles

- Larmore, *The Morals of Modernity*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 121ff.
- 2 Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 286.
- 3 Allen Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 5.
- 4 Mark Tunick, *Hegel's Political Philosophy: Interpreting the Practice of Legal Punishment*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 14.
- 5 Frederick Neuhouser, *Foundations of Hegel's Social Theory: Actualizing Freedom*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 134.
- 6 Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 274.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 272.
- 8 Cf. Pinkard's interpretation of Hegel's *Logic*: "[T]o say that we know something is not to compare two 'things' at all (as we seemingly do when we match up, for example, a photograph with what it is about); it is rather to make a *normative ascription*, to say that the person making the claim is entitled to the claim. That is, our ascriptions of knowledge are not comparisons of any kind of subjective state with something non-subjective but instead are moves within a social space structured by responsibilities, entitlements, attributions, and the undertaking of commitments." *German Philosophy, 1760–1860: The Legacy of Idealism*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 252.
- 9 See Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implications*. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 239ff.
- 10 Stanley Rosen, *The Idea of Hegel's Science of Logic*. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 284.
- 11 Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 214. Also cf. the discussion by Robert Brandom, "Some Pragmatist Themes in Hegel's Idealism: Negotiation and Administration in Hegel's Account of the Structure and Content of Conceptual Norms," *European Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 7, no. 2 (1999): 164–189.
- 12 Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy*, 215.
- 13 Pippin sees the application of the Hegelian project not in totally different terms from this, but he nevertheless seems to remain on a meta level of abstraction where we are self-assessing our institutions but without some kind of criteria for critique: "There is no . . . external point of view, and so 'we,' ourselves inheritors and products of such self-transformations, must understand how such institutions and practices have come to assess themselves, what sort of reassurance they have achieved, how satisfying they have turned out to be, how they have led to 'us.'" *Idealism as Modernism: Hegelian Variations*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 336. I think that Pippin is essentially correct but that this position must be pushed farther, and we can do this by incorporating an ontological account of our sociality in order to grant us more rationality in our assessment of ourselves and the social world that we inhabit. Indeed, Pippin argues that there is a criterion for our self-assessment: it is to be found in our satisfaction with accounts about how our self-transformations correct for previous formations of ethical life. But still, we do this through reason-exchange, a non-metaphysical, almost pragmatist method of collective self-inquiry. I am not convinced that this is sufficient: We need more substantive insight into our sociality and the ways that it works to produce us to be able to assess and to justify the good as an objective but nevertheless capable of progressive self-constitution and self-transformation.
- 14 Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy*, 149.



- 15 By seeing Hegel in more Kantian terms, Pippin and others who follow this non-metaphysical account of social reasoning maintain that our sociality is to be understood in terms of our recognitive relations with one another and the giving and responding to reasons with those others that we recognize as possessing the status as reason-givers. However, it seems difficult to accept the thesis that Hegel would have been satisfied with this account of objectivity as resulting from intersubjective validity. Rather, as Ivan Soll has pointed out, that in contrast to Kant's categories that are "objective in the sense of being intersubjectively valid . . . Hegel wants to argue the much stronger and more general thesis that all thoughts, not just Kant's limited list of categories, are objective because universal. But the sort of universality which he plausibly attributes to all thoughts is different from the sort Kant attributed to the categories and, more important, not of a sort to support the claim that thought is objective." *An Introduction to Hegel's Metaphysics*. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 91.
- 16 Cf. Pippin's thesis that "The ultimate Hegelian claim is that the problem of self-definition or identity is a problem of social power, not metaphysical truth, and that this process has a certain 'Logic,'" *Idealism as Modernism*, 424.
- 17 James Kreines, *Reason in the World: Hegel's Metaphysics and Its Philosophical Appeal*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 3.
- 18 Stephen Houlgate remarks on this point that "Hegel distinguishes two main forms of metaphysics—Scholastic metaphysics and modern, post-Reformation metaphysics . . . Scholastic metaphysics, Hegel argues, has as its primary task the proof of theological doctrine; it is therefore subordinated to the positive authority of the Church. Modern metaphysics, on the other hand, is more autonomous. In accordance with what he sees as the Reformation notion that truth is available to all and not the 'property' of an authoritarian institution, Hegel says that modern metaphysics looks for its content within reason itself, rather than in the doctrines of the Church." *Hegel, Nietzsche and the Criticism of Metaphysics*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 103.
- 19 See the important discussion by Karl-Heinz Ilting, "Hegels Auseinandersetzung mit der aristotelischen Politik," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* (1971): 38–58.
- 20 Robert Stern insightfully remarks on this point that "Idealism for Hegel . . . is a position that does not treat finite things as 'ultimate and absolute' in themselves, but relates them to an enduring and infinite 'ground' of some kind, of which these finite things are limited realizations; but what idealism in this sense requires, Hegel thinks, is that we move beyond 'empirical cognition.' This is because this infinite ground is not something that is apparent to us in experience, but can only be something we arrive at through reflection." *Hegelian Metaphysics*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 68.
- 21 Stern, *Hegelian Metaphysics*, 68.
- 22 Hence Kant notes that, when discussing the principle of final cause, "owing to the universality and necessity which that principle predicates of such finality, it cannot rest merely on empirical grounds, but must have some underlying *a priori* principle. This principle, however, may be one that is merely regulative, and it may be that the ends in question only reside in the idea of the person forming the estimate and not in any efficient cause whatever." *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, §5(66). Here, Kant suggests that things like final causes are, in fact, imposed by us on the world. Ontology therefore gives way to epistemology and reason is confined to the cognizing subject. Hegel's ideas



- are constitutive in the sense that rational structures exist in the world and articulate forms of being. Hence, for Hegel, ontology pushes back against epistemology.
- 23 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse sur l'origine des inegalites parmi les hommes*. In *Oeuvres Complètes*, vol. 3 (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1969), 171.
  - 24 See Michael J. Thompson, "Autonomy and Common Good: Interpreting Rousseau's General Will," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, vol. 25, no. 2 (2017): 266–285.
  - 25 For more on the Rousseauvian antecedents of Hegel's political and moral ideas, see Dieter Henrich, *Hegel im Kontext*. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1975), 44ff. as well as Ernst Bloch, *Subjekt-Objekt. Erläuterungen zu Hegel*. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1962), 244ff.
  - 26 For a discussion of Hegel's treatment of ontological experience with respect to basic categories in his logic, see Eugen Fink, *Sein und Mensch. Vom Wesen der ontologischen Erfahrung*. (Freiburg: Verlag Karl Alber, 1977), 61ff.
  - 27 See the discussion by Paul G. Cobben, "The Logical Structure of Self-Consciousness," in Alfred Denker and Michael Vater (eds.), *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit: New Critical Essays*. (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2003), 193–212. Also see Quentin Lauer, *A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1976), 115ff.
  - 28 Elsewhere I have tried to work out a more satisfying relation between phenomenology and ontology in Hegel's thought in "Recognition and Ontology in Hegel's Practical Philosophy," *Review of Metaphysics*. (forthcoming).
  - 29 Clark Butler has argued on this point that "Once the Logic of Being and Essence is understood, the Logic of the Self-Concept simply harvests the fruit of the most nearly true logical definition of the Absolute," *Hegel's Logic: Between Dialectic and History*. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 209.
  - 30 Willem deVries argues on this point that "Hegel characterizes the spiritual as the internal, in contrast to the externality of material objects. This contrast between internal and external is best understood, I believe, in terms of self- and other-determination. Spirit is what is self-determined; that is, spiritual phenomena are to be construed as manifestations of a self-productive activity. A self-productive activity is a special form of teleological activity, namely, one in which the telos is itself such self-productive activity." *Hegel's Theory of Mental Activity: An Introduction to Theoretical Spirit*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 26.
  - 31 John McCumber insightfully remarks on this point that "[i]n this reciprocal version of the general Hegelian notion of 'sublation' . . . what gradually becomes actualized is not merely various properties of x and y, but their shared nature or community itself. This shared identity is not given at the start, except as *leere Art und Weise*, but is gradually constructed as the increasing, but always determinate, identity of the reciprocally interacting beings." "Substance and Reciprocity in Hegel," *Owl of Minerva*, vol. 35, no. 1–2 (2003–04): 1–24, 7.
  - 32 See G. W. F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, §§157–158.
  - 33 Frederick Beiser, *Hegel*. (New York: Routledge, 2005), 57.
  - 34 Rosen, *The Idea of Hegel's Science of Logic*, 237.
  - 35 Errol Harris, *An Interpretation of the Logic of Hegel*. (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), 267.
  - 36 Harris argues on this point that the mechanism implies its very transcendence: "In truth, the mutual independence of atomic parts of the mechanical world

- is spurious. So likewise is that of the incidence of forces. Bodies are supposed to move under the influence of gravity, and this is dependent upon distance and mass. In consequence, the forces are pervasive throughout space, and every body must exert some effect, however slight, on every other. Thus even in their supposed separation they are mutually independent." *An Interpretation of the Logic of Hegel*, 265.
- 37 As Nathan Ross makes evident, "the mechanical object finds its determinacy in another object. But this 'being determined in its other' is not a relation of determinate being, or a relation of essence (such as causality), since the other in which it is determined is itself an object, and hence indifferent to its determining relation. Insofar as an object is thought as determined in another object, the ground of the relation is missing. The determining object has its determination not in itself, but in a relation to another object that is indifferent and external." *On Mechanism in Hegel's Social and Political Philosophy*. (London: Routledge, 2008), 82.
  - 38 Ross again notes that "[t]he freedom of the concept does not find a sufficient realization in this stubborn independence of the mechanistic object. . . . It would of course be misleading to imagine that the concept, as a methodological ideal, is looking over the present development and finds it lacking. Instead, the concept and its demand for self-determination, is present in the very activity of unfolding this contradiction." *On Mechanism in Hegel's Social and Political Philosophy*, 83.
  - 39 Myriam Bienenstock argues that mechanism "presupposes atomism. In it, no self-determination is at work. Rather, because the parts of a mechanism are taken to be external to each other, only efficient causes can be found in it. Indeed, he insists, one may well say that in a mechanism objects or their elements exert 'violence' (*Gewalt*) against each other: objects bear upon each other in a merely external way, and the resistance they evince in opposing each other appears as a resistance to merely arbitrary and ungrounded extraneous pressure." "Hegel's Conception of Teleology," in Kostas Gavroglu, John Stachel, and Marx Wartofsky (eds.), *Science, Mind and Art: Essays on Science and the Humanistic Understanding in Art, Epistemology, Religion and Ethics*. (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995), 58.
  - 40 Butler argues that "[m]echanism in the logic of the concept resembles the atomism of the logic of being, and the reciprocal interaction of 'things' and 'substances' in the logic of essence. The contradiction of mechanism (as of atomism, interactionism, and the theology of quantity) is that it asserts a mutual independence of objects which yet are interdependent." *Hegel's Logic*, 259.
  - 41 G. W. F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, vol. 2. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1969), 429.
  - 42 Hegel notes that "the passage from chemism to teleological relation is contained in the mutual sublation of both forms of the chemical process. What therefore results is the emancipation of the concept which was only in itself in chemism and mechanism; herewith the concept existing for itself is the end (*Zweck*)." *Enzyklopädie* §203.
  - 43 *Wissenschaft der Logik*, vol. 2, 435.
  - 44 Justus Hartnack fills this point out when he argues that "[t]he mechanical and the chemical models of the object imply a deterministic conception of the objective world—a world in which changes and processes are caused by external forces, not by the objects themselves. None of the objects, according to these models, are self-determined. Opposed to this is the teleological view, according to which the final determining cause is, no external, but an internal

- cause." *An Introduction to Hegel's Logic*. (Cambridge, MA: Hackett Publishers, 1998), 108.
- 45 Harris explains this "[a]s thus self-sustaining, the whole is end or aim (*Zweck*), and that again is the persistence and self-generation of the whole through its own process. Purposiveness is expressed in the mutual relation of the parts as ends to means, which is also the mutual relation of the parts to the whole; for the activity of the whole is directed to the maintenance of the parts and the perpetuation of the processes that sustain them; and the concerted effect of these processes and of the functions performed by the parts is the self-maintenance of the whole." *An Interpretation of the Logic of Hegel*, 267–268.
  - 46 *Enzyklopädie*, §204.
  - 47 Willem deVries argues on this point that "Hegel believes that mechanical and chemical explanations are condemned always to remain incomplete, for they cannot be applied to the totality of things to which they apply, because they always presuppose further links in the causal chains. That there are things ordered by the mechanical and chemical principles remains beyond their competence to explain." "The Dialectic of Teleology," *Philosophical Topics*, vol. 19, no. 2 (1991): 51–70, 66.
  - 48 *Wissenschaft der Logik*, vol. 2, 438.
  - 49 *Ibid.*
  - 50 See the discussion by Rosen, *The Idea of Hegel's Science of Logic*, 459ff.
  - 51 Willem deVries notes on this point that "Hegel denies the conceptual and ontological *priority* of the causal, physical order. In particular, truly understanding something is not, according to Hegel, a matter of locating it within the causal order, but a matter of locating it within the self-realization of the Absolute, a teleological structure that transcends the physical. The teleological order, not the causal order of efficient causes, is the ultimate touchstone." *Hegel's Theory of Mental Activity*, 3.
  - 52 As Frederick Beiser argues, "[i]n an analytic universal or *compositum* the parts precede the whole and each has its identity apart from it; in a synthetic universal or *totum* the whole precedes the parts and makes each of them possible. For an analytic universal there is a distinction between possibility and reality because there is no reason the universal applies to anything; for a synthetic universal there is no such distinction because the universal is self-realizing." *Hegel*, 96.
  - 53 deVries, *Hegel's Theory of Mental Activity*, 8. Heikki Ikäheimo similarly argues that "[w]hat Hegel never says is that in order for something to be or to count as x it must be a good x. What he says is that x's have an essence or 'concept,' and that this essence or concept is the immanent criterion of the goodness of anything that is x. This is the conceptual strategy of *normative essentialism*." "Ethical Perfectionism in Social Ontology—A Hegelian Alternative," in Italo Testa and Luigi Ruggiu (eds.), *I That Is We, We That Is I, Perspectives on Contemporary Hegel*. (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 49–67, 57.
  - 54 As Rosen argues, "[t]he correct formulation is that theory is unified with practice in the form of activity. This activity is the production of form or truth in accord with an end, an end that corresponds to the idea of the good." *The Idea of Hegel's Science of Logic*, 479.
  - 55 Hartnack, *An Introduction to Hegel's Logic*, 86.
  - 56 See Michael Quante, *Hegel's Concept of Action*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 13ff.
  - 57 Stephen Houlgate observes this aspect of the idea of freedom and the power of negation when he argues that "my very identity as a practical being lies in knowing myself to be the source of possible changes in the world that follow

- from as yet unrealized possibilities conceived and ‘posited by me.’ Such a consciousness of oneself as essentially the source of new possibilities involves what Hegel refers to as a ‘negative determination,’ that is, an awareness that what is now the case need *not* be, that one’s activity is not simply restricted to sustaining what at present exists, and that one is able to bring about through one’s own activity what is not yet the case.” “The Unity of Theoretical and Practical Spirit in Hegel’s Concept of Freedom,” *Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 48, no. 4 (1995): 859–881, 864–865.
- 58 G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*. (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1970), §260.
- 59 Dieter Henrich has called this the project of a “monistic ontology,” which he describes as a program that “attempts explicitly to defend and to explicate in proper conceptual form the claim that the sheer multiplicity of singular moments need not and should not constitute the ultimately irreducible point of departure for any attempted comprehension of the structural character of the world. The coexistence and order of singularities is not simply an ultimate fact that cannot be further comprehended, one that merely corresponds to the factual multiplicity of those singularities. For we are here confronted with ‘order’ in a quite different sense altogether, and one in which the very concept of order allows us to *understand* the existence of the singularities in question. The concept of order here is derived not from the presupposition of the existence of many singularities, and in relation to which it thus would function only in secondary or at least dependent fashion, in the way in which irreducibly dependent elements may depend on one another. The unitary significance of order here is itself a autarchic, and the singularity of the finite dependent moments is radically dependent on and reducible to that order.” “Logical Form and Real Totality: The Authentic Conceptual Form of Hegel’s Concept of the State,” in Robert Pippin and Otfried Höffe (eds.), *Hegel on Ethics and Politics*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 241–267, 249.
- 60 *Philosophie des Rechts* §158.
- 61 “Since marriage is a substantial relation, the life involved in it is life in its totality,” *Philosophie des Rechts*, §161.
- 62 *Philosophie des Rechts*, §164.
- 63 *Ibid.*, §163.
- 64 Hegel contrasts the initial drive to create a family with its deeper, rational and ethical purpose in the modern world: “The ethical principle which is conjoined with the natural generation of children and which was assumed to have primary importance in first forming the marriage union, is actually realized in the second or spiritual birth of the children: in educating them to be independent persons (*selbständigen Personen*),” *Enzyklopädie*, §521.
- 65 *Enzyklopädie*, §523.
- 66 *Ibid.*
- 67 *Philosophie des Rechts*, §185.
- 68 In the atomism of civil society “the substance is reduced to a general system of adjustments to connect independent (*selbständigen*) extremes and their particular interests. The developed totality of this complex of connections is the state as bourgeois association (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*) or *external state*.” *Enzyklopädie*, §523.
- 69 *Enzyklopädie*, §525.
- 70 *Philosophie des Rechts*, §183.
- 71 *Ibid.*, §187.
- 72 *Ibid.*, §198.
- 73 David Kolb rightly remarks that “[i]n the categories involving reciprocal interaction under law, the attempt to make one category basic is abandoned,

and all the aspects are posited as mediated by their mutual interaction. This explicitly posits the lack of a first immediate foundation and replaces the demand for such a basic starting point with the movement of the whole constituted by mutual reciprocity (*Wechselwirkung*). At this stage each member is thought of as constituted by interaction with the others, but there is not yet any thought of the system as a whole distinguished from its members, and the whole remains indeterminate.” *The Critique of Pure Modernity: Hegel, Heidegger and After*. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 58.

74 *Philosophie des Rechts*, §236z.

75 *Ibid.*, §243.

76 For a more developed discussion of this aspect of Hegel’s theory of the state, see my paper “Hegel’s Anti-Capitalist State,” *Discusiones Filosóficas*, vol. 14, no. 22 (2013): 43–72.

77 *Philosophie des Rechts*, §258.

78 Christopher Yeomans, *Freedom and Reflection: Hegel and the Logic of Agency*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 225.

79 “The Unity of the Absolute and Its Reflection Is the *Absolute Relation* or Even More the Absolute as Relation to Itself—*Substance*,” *Wissenschaft der Logik*, vol. 2: 186–187.

80 “The Idea is essentially *process*, because its identity is the absolute and free concept insofar as it is absolute negativity and for that reason dialectical.” *Enzyklopädie*, §215.

81 *Philosophie des Rechts*, §27.

82 “This action of the rational will is finite and its finitude lies in the contradiction that in the inconsistent terms applied to the objective world the end of the Good is just as much not executed as executed, the end in question put as unessential as much as essential, as actual as at the same time impossible.” *Enzyklopädie*, §234.

83 Michael Quante rightly points out that “[i]ndividuality is nothing other than the unity of the two other determinations; positively formulated, it is the thought of the particular *as* the universality of determining itself therein.” *Hegel’s Concept of Action*, 48. Also see Christopher Yeomans, *The Expansion of Autonomy: Hegel’s Pluralistic Philosophy of Action*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 163ff. This characterization is correct but requires more *content* to bring it to concreteness.

84 See the important discussion by Brigitte Bitsch, *Sollensbegriff und Moralitätskritik bei G. W. F. Hegel*. (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1977), 214ff.

85 Eugène Fleischmann therefore argues that: “une totalité existant objectivement et la ‘vérité,’ selon laquelle elle est pensée et reçoit un sens, ne peuvent signifier deux entités séparées, mais elles forment une seule et même unité: le penser doit nécessairement s’objectiver en produisant les déterminations d’un monde existant, et le monde objectif ne doit pas être étranger à sa compréhension par le penser, mais manifester un rapprochement jusqu’à s’identifier à lui,” *La science universelle ou la logique de Hegel*. (Paris: Plon, 1968), 311.

86 Andrew Vincent maintains quite rightly on this point that “[b]y maturing within institutions the individual rises from pupilage to critical participation. This creates a double function in institutional life and overcomes the potential charge of conservatism, since individuals do not simply accept the status quo, but also actually criticize it. When the individual is mature and self-reflective, he can then apply his powers to criticize the institutions to make them more adequate embodiments of ethical purpose. The fundamental norms sustain and are sustained by individual critical praxis. The test of an institution’s worth is its ability to provide the conditions for self-development.” “The

- State and Social Purpose in Idealist Political Philosophy,” *History of European Ideas*, vol. 8, no. 3 (1987): 333–347, 342.
- 87 Michael Theunissen therefore observes that: “Am Ende seiner Logik steht die Einsicht, daß das Allgemeine nur wahr sein kann als ein Verhältnis zur Einheit, welches ihrer Verschmähung durch die Abstraktion opponiert, das heißt als ein Anerkennungsverhältnis, in dem die Liebe nichts Herablassendes hat, weil sie das Einzelne gerade in seine Freiheit entläßt, und in dem sie gleichwohl zu ihm heruntersteigt, sofern sie seine Faktizität annimmt.” *Sein und Schein: Die kritische Funktion der Hegelschen Logik*. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1978), 43–44.
- 88 Michael Quante also notes that: “Der Begriff qua Einzelheit ist das Subjekt, das sich in einer selbstgesetzten Mannigfaltigkeit von Besonderheiten selbst als konkrete Allgemeinheit (das heißt als inhaltlich und formal autonomes Allgemeines) manifestiert. Hegel versteht dabei Subjektivität generell als Individualisierung und Verwirklichung eines Allgemeinen in einem Einzelnen.” *Die Wirklichkeit des Geistes. Studien zu Hegel*. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2011), 164.

## 6 The Metaphysics of Rational Action

### Kantian and Aristotelian Themes in Hegel's Absolute Idealism<sup>1</sup>

*Sebastian Stein*

#### Introduction

Is Hegel best understood as a distinctly post-Kantian thinker or as an Aristotelian realist/naturalist? In this chapter, I argue that despite Hegel's methodological proximity to Aristotle that motivates both thinkers to reject the consciousness-based perspective characteristic of Kant's transcendental idealism, Hegel's practical philosophy is distinctly post-Kantian. This is evidenced by (1) Hegel's concern with the irreducibility of individual agency, (2) his commitment to the Kant-inspired "metaphysics of the concept," (3) his definition of ethical duty as the highest end and (4) his defense of the irreducible status of the metaphysical realms of nature and *Geist*.

This conclusion mostly contradicts numerous convictions articulated in the current debate about Hegel, Aristotle and Kant. For example, in his forceful contributions to the wider discussion about moral and sociopolitical normativity, Robert Stern has argued<sup>2</sup> against Robert Pippin's so-called post-Kantian<sup>3</sup> reading of Hegel and its focus on historically informed, reason-based self-legislation. Instead, Stern favors John McDowell's interpretation, according to which Hegel ought to be associated with a variety of "Aristotelian"<sup>4</sup> perfectionist<sup>5</sup> naturalism. It claims that Hegel's account of ethical life describes how an always already-defined, flourishing human life ought to be led.

Stern's emphasis on the universalist dimensions of Hegel's account of ethical action does much to counterbalance overtly subjectivist, individualist and relativist readings. And indeed, Hegel seems methodologically closer to Aristotle than to Kant insofar as Hegel's philosophical point of view enables him to go beyond the confines of consciousness-based rationality typical of Kant's transcendental idealism. However, this methodological difference will turn out to be irrelevant in the context of the philosophy of rational action because the practical philosophies of Aristotle, Kant and Hegel are limited to discussing the behavior of finite and (self-)conscious (Kant), minded (Hegel) or soul-possessing



(Aristotle) rational agents and have no direct concern with nature or (a) god.

Crucially, describing Hegel as a neo-Aristotelian naturalist can obscure the profound structural inspiration Hegel's general and special metaphysics drew from Kant's moral theory and Kant's philosophy of (self-) consciousness. This is shown by way of analyses of Kant's and Hegel's notions of rational action. Both authors insist on the irreducibility of the moments universality, individuality and particularity *while* maintaining that these are aspects of a single conceptual unity. While Hegel thinks that Kant does not succeed in *proving* this unity, Hegel's own concept of the will should be read as an attempt to complete Kant's project of combining universalist elements with a genuine concern with particularity and individuality.

In contrast, it could be argued that Aristotle's commitment to substance metaphysics renders him an individuality- and thus independence-eschewing universalist. By prioritizing universal substance over the individual agent, Aristotle involuntarily deprives the agent of metaphysically warranted, truly independent choice and agency. In this context, one dimension of the methodological contrast between Kant and Aristotle is questioned by showing that Kant is genuinely concerned with human flourishing and treats "practical rationality" like an Aristotelian "general kind" that resembles an immanent purpose that all finite, rational agents fall under and ought to realize. Unlike Aristotle, however, Kant and Hegel are able to metaphysically establish that individuals do have an independent choice regarding the degree to which they achieve practical rationality. Against Aristotelian readings of Hegel, it will then be argued that Hegel follows Kant in rejecting the notion of "moral happiness" (i.e., Aristotelian *eudaimonia*) as the highest end of human action. Instead, Kant and Hegel prioritize acting out of ethical duty over *any* kind of happiness. Finally, Hegel's nature- and *Geist*-incorporating "absolute idealism" is shown to undermine the validity of the label "naturalism." Even calling Hegel a *Geist*-respecting "liberal naturalist" is potentially misleading as it suggests that *Geist* can be reduced to nature instead of defining nature and *Geist* as varieties of the ontological idea in the way Hegel's absolute idealism does.

The chapter consists of four parts: Part I provides the grounds for identifying Hegel's philosophy of rational action with Kant's by reconstructing Hegel's interpretation of Kant's practical philosophy. Like Hegel, Kant combines universalist elements with a genuine concern with individuality while Aristotle is best described as an all-the-way-down universalist. This prepares part II's description of Hegel's account of rational agency as a modified, structural continuation of Kant's moral theory. Part III shows that Hegel's metaphysics of rational agency are based on his general metaphysics of "the concept," which (1) architecturally resemble Kant's metaphysics of (self-)consciousness and of moral agency and

(2) contradict Aristotle's universalist metaphysics of substance. While Kant resembles Aristotle in virtue of sharing a perfectionist concern with human flourishing and with defining an agent-immanent general kind of rational action, Hegel aligns with Kant against Aristotle in prioritizing duty over "moral happiness" (*eudaimonia*) as final end of human action. In part IV, Hegel's own philosophical taxonomy is examined. This entails a conclusion against some currently influential interpretations: Hegel is neither a naturalist nor a realist nor a subjective idealist nor a spiritualist. Instead, his notion of absolute idealism undercuts the dichotomy between a spiritualist philosophy of *Geist* and a naturalist philosophy of nature by defining *nature* and *Geist* as two irreducible, mutually supporting, varieties of what he calls "the idea." His idealism is "absolute" insofar as it (1) describes the determinations of the self-referential and thus "absolute" idea and (2) defines philosophy as the idea's self-referential and thus "absolute" activity of self-comprehension.

## I. Hegel's Kant

At least since Hobbes's *Leviathan*, where free individuals contractually constitute universal norms,<sup>6</sup> one of the main challenges for liberal moral and political philosophy has been to find an answer to the question of how to design a notion of practical normativity that is able to accommodate both: (1) consideration for the importance of individual self-legislating action and (2) the true universality of the endorsed norms. The moral and ethical rules that inform moral and sociopolitical life are supposed to be universally valid *and* to issue from our deliberations as autonomous individuals. While classical authors (e.g., Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas), emphasized the importance of normativity's universal validity, modern writers (e.g., Hobbes, Rousseau, Habermas, Rawls) generally put increasing importance on the fact that individual citizens author or construct these norms.

### *Hegel on Kant's Account of Practical Reason*

In this context, Immanuel Kant is usually regarded as a typically modern and thus individuality-focused thinker. However, interpreting Kant, Hegel acknowledges that Kant is careful to avoid the relativism that results from grounding a theory of normativity on individual choice alone. Instead, Hegel finds in Kant a novel and unique combination of three logical elements that lie at the heart of all (practical) philosophy.<sup>7</sup> Hegel labels these "individuality," "particularity" and "universality"<sup>8</sup> and places them at the center of his own analysis of rational agency.

In the following description of Hegel's interpretation of Kant, the meaning of these terms will be defined as follows: (1) "Individuality" represents the finite, individual subject. (2) Universality stands for the moral

law. (3) “Particularity” represents the conceptual unity of individuality and universality, that is, a normatively valid, concrete and determinate action committed by a particular individual with specific abilities and interests.

While most philosophers agree that a convincing account of rational agency ought to accommodate all three elements, there are stark differences to be found in the way these elements are related to each other. Most of these result from different prioritizations of one of them over the others. For example, one might privilege universality over individuality and particularity (e.g. Plato, Spinoza), particularity over universality and individuality (e.g. Hume), individuality over universality and particularity (e.g. Rawls) and so on. What Hegel took to be novel about Kant’s approach was the notion of a radical irreducibility of both individuality and universality<sup>9</sup> *while* maintaining that these two are still compatible and jointly give rise to particularity.

Given individuality’s central importance in Kant’s account, the discussion will begin with it. According to Hegel, Kant’s moral agents are all irreducibly individual in the sense that there are no morally relevant, particular differences between them—such as particular mental or physical or age-related traits. Every individual is infinitely valuable, simply by virtue of being a member of the community of rational beings. No such individual answers to a higher authority than the reason within.<sup>10</sup> This renders the individuals independent as they can always will otherwise and their choices and actions are always potentially arbitrary.<sup>11</sup>

At the same time, normativity itself—what Kant calls the “moral law”<sup>12</sup>—is irreducibly universal. Like individuality, it does not depend on any particulars such as cultural, spatiotemporal context, the particular traits of those who endorse it etc.<sup>13</sup> Nor does it rely on the individuals’ activity: the universal is necessary and valid for all individuals, irrespective of what they happen to decide. The universal is lawlike, and the individuals are “subjects” to it<sup>14</sup> so that the universal morally orients the individuals in their deliberations. This objective quality of being “given” to the individuals via the structure of their own reason prevents the reduction of the universal to being a mere “generality” that is “constructed” by finite individuals based on contingent preferences or conditions.<sup>15</sup>

However, while Kant defines the terms *individuality* and *universality* as irreducible and as mutually exclusive, he also implies that they are compatible and therefore somehow identical. If there were no identity between “us” individuals and the universal moral law, we could not grasp or respect it nor could it oblige us. Furthermore, Kant’s examples of successful moral action, such as “[promoting] others’ happiness,”<sup>16</sup> “correctly charging customers,”<sup>17</sup> “making honest promises,”<sup>18</sup> “honoring debt”<sup>19</sup> and “respecting other individuals as ends,”<sup>20</sup> among others, illustrate that particular, individually committed actions can successfully fulfill the universal’s requirements.

Although Kant implies that individual and universal are somehow identical, Hegel argues, Kant also explicitly prioritizes the difference between individuality and universality over their identity.<sup>21</sup> For example, Kant insists that the moral law is completely necessary<sup>22</sup> in virtue of being utterly independent of individuals' arbitrary choices. It does not depend on individuals' decisions and is valid regardless of whether individuals happen to agree on or enact it or not.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, the individual is entirely free to choose to obey the moral law or not. It might oblige "us" as individuals, but it does not compel or force us. If we were not independent from the law in a meaningful sense, we could not but obey it.

This prioritization of the difference of individual and universal also motivates what Robert Stern calls the "standard story[s]"<sup>24</sup> charge of emptiness against Kant's moral theory. The difference between the elements is seen to prevent the successful unification of individual and universal in a content-guaranteeing notion of particularity. Particularity is defined as the successful endorsement of a universally valid content of action by the individual. The concept of a normatively valid action thus contains all three elements: (1) It has a particular determination, (2) it is committed by the individual *and* (3) it has universal validity because it meets the universal requirements of the moral law. This defines morally valid particularity—and thus the determinate content of moral action—as a conceptual unity of universal norm and individual action. When the individual commits to a universally valid, determined action, the individual "particularizes" the universal so that the universal is manifest in the particular action of the individual.

However, according to Hegel, this notion of morally valid particularity remains out of reach since Kant defines universal and individual as primarily different,<sup>25</sup> rendering universality's obligation<sup>26</sup> on our individuality tragic. Since "we" as individuals are primarily different from the universal, we cannot fulfill its demands. By definition, there is no particular choice we can make to satisfy universality's requirements and none of our actions can be shown to live up to the demands of the moral law.<sup>27</sup> Put as a question, if the individuals' will is as arbitrary and its decisions contingent while the moral law is defined as universal and necessary, yet both are irreducible and exclude each other, how could they be united within the same category of determined, particular action? How can any moral action be particular in the sense of being universal *and* individual, necessary *and* contingent?

### *The Role of the Categorical Imperative*

In his attempt to solve this problem, Kant offers the morality-grounding and legality-orienting,<sup>28</sup> universal "Categorical Imperative."<sup>29</sup> It is supposed to work as an identification procedure of morally valid, individually enacted, particular maxims to enable the logical connection of universal

moral law and individual action via particularity: it is designed to show how the universal is particularized and to establish that the universal can be present in determined, individual action. The imperative does so by demanding the conceptual consistency of the particular maxim that our action is based on.<sup>30</sup> For example, if we fundamentally accept the institution of truth-telling, we must not at the same time undermine it by lying.<sup>31</sup> Or if we accept the institution of property by borrowing money, we must not at the same time undermine it by not paying the money back.

However, while the Categorical Imperative can help us identify inconsistent behavior *once we have accepted a particular way of acting/maxim* (e.g., truth-telling, respecting property, respecting others as ends, etc.), it cannot explain that we must accept *this* particular way of acting/maxim. For example, once we accepted “respecting property” or “telling the truth” as individually enacted moral maxims, we can easily demand not to affirm and deny them at the same time. But how do we know which particular maxims are moral? Given the moral law’s utter and irreducible universality and the Categorical Imperative’s exclusive demand of consistency, it seems impossible to deduce the notion of the particular maxims “respecting property” or “telling the truth” from the Imperative.<sup>32</sup>

For example, Kant claims that the maxim “steal money to benefit the poor” would be classified as a “hypothetical imperative” as its end is not necessary and universal but particular—it serves another end such as “overall social benefit.”<sup>33</sup> This entails that one can accuse the maxim of contradicting *and* affirming the institution of property. It affirms property by transferring property to the poor (rational beings). At the same time, it denies it by taking property from the rich (rational beings). The maxim thus implies that one must respect some rational beings’ property and not others’, although all share in the morally relevant status of being rational beings. However, while the violation of the consistency requirement is easily spotted once “respecting property” is accepted as a maxim, there seems nothing in the imperative to tell us that “respecting property” is the maxim’s content one ought to care for.

This entails that evidently immoral but consistent maxims pass the test of the Categorical Imperative. For example, the maxim “enslave all rational beings” is consistent since it demands the same behavior toward all rational beings. And yet, Kant wants to classify it as immoral because it violates rational beings’ status as self-determining individuals and treats them as means.<sup>34</sup> However, this is only problematic if one agrees that free self-determination of individuals is morally desirable. And while this might well be the case, this cannot be *deduced* from the Categorical Imperative’s requirement of logical consistency alone. Also the alternative argument claiming that it is irrational for a finite, rational being to actively undermine rationality as such is empty, as it does not define what particular aspects rationality includes. The maxim “not being enslaved”

might be self-defeating but only if one has already accepted that being a free person is rational.<sup>35</sup>

### *Individual and Universal in Kant's Theoretical Philosophy*

The explicit preference for the difference of individual and universal over their implicit identity that Hegel finds in Kant's practical philosophy structurally parallels Kant's discussion of the relationship between consciousness and object in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. While some rationalists provide an identity-based notion of proof or "grounding" by appealing to an "all-the-way-down" principle of sufficient reason to explain the relationship between thinker and world,<sup>36</sup> Kant's notion of 'deduction' seems to retain an element of irreducible difference.

For example, in the "transcendental deduction,"<sup>37</sup> Kant "deduces" the category-mediated, concept-creating compatibility of the understanding and the given manifold by situating them within the transcendental unity of consciousness. All objectivity- and concept-defining activity is accompanied by consciousness's "I think"<sup>38</sup> so that the understanding's concept-creating relationship to the given manifold is a relationship of consciousness to itself: in referring to the object, consciousness refers to itself.<sup>39</sup> All objectivity is "of the subject." Unless understanding and manifold were not always already compatible and thus identical, intuition, synthesis and cognition of objects would be impossible; that is, intuitions would be uninformative, and our understanding would not be able to conceptually unite the manifold into objects.

The unity of consciousness, however, remains distinct from a consciousness-external reality, which is unrelated to the forms of intuition and sensual experience. This "reality" is the "noumenal"<sup>40</sup> and is thought to consist of "things-in-themselves"<sup>41</sup> as opposed to appearances. To Kant, the existence of the noumenal undermines the notion of a Berkeleyan, merely "subjective idealism"<sup>42</sup> and guarantees the "given" character of the manifold and the receptive dimension of intuition. If the "things-in-themselves" were but a notion posited by conscious reason to limit itself (*Grenzbegriff*), they would be products of consciousness and therefore subjective. This would undermine the notion that reason alone can prove the real existence of world and objects. Intuition as a partly *receptive* activity would be impossible. There would be nothing to guarantee the true consciousness- and thus subjectivity-independent "givenness" of the manifold within consciousness and there would be no guarantee that there truly is a world independent of consciousness.<sup>43</sup> One would have to rely on a reason-external principle, for example, a world- and objects-guaranteeing benevolent god. The "given" manifold, Kant maintains, can thus not entirely originate within our consciousness.<sup>44</sup>

The existence of consciousness-independent "things-in-themselves" thus undercuts the notion that all "givenness" is an aspect of consciousness,

that is, that it is internal to and identical with it. Since the consciousness-external noumenal reality guarantees the given character of the consciousness-internal manifold, somehow the consciousness-external given and the consciousness-internal given have to relate to each other. In its activity of intuiting and synthesizing the given manifold, that is, relating to and constituting objectivity internally, consciousness (via understanding) thus somehow also relates to something external and thus *not* to itself. And yet, this relationship between consciousness-external “given” and consciousness-internal “given” is opaque by definition, since as a conscious, reasonable being, one can only know what happens within the scope of consciousness.

Kant thus insists on the difference between consciousness (subject) and things-in-themselves (“noumenal, givenness-guaranteeing reality”) *while* implying that understanding (subject) and manifold (object) are identical within the transcendental unity of consciousness. And yet, this identity is not explicit from the beginning: since Kant starts with the difference between consciousness and things-in-themselves, any identity-claim within the transcendental unity is either “too late” or not justified. It cannot be “deduced” with reference to a unity that would define the fundamental relationship between consciousness and “things-in-themselves.” In order to prove that consciousness and objectivity-guaranteeing “things-in-themselves” are compatible and thus identical, they would have to be shown to be always already identical *first*. However, if this were the case, their difference would disappear within the identity of consciousness—all objectivity would be subjective. And with the difference, so one might worry, the identity of subjectivity would disappear. For by definition, identity is the identity of differing entities.<sup>45</sup> To avoid this, Hegel argues, Kant holds on to the priority of the difference between consciousness and things-in-themselves while positing them as identical *and* different within the transcendental unity of consciousness.<sup>46</sup>

On Hegel’s reading, a similar worry motivates Kant to insist on the irreducible difference between individual and universal moral law in the context of his practical philosophy. Hegel’s Kant worries that if individuality did not radically differ from the moral law’s universality, individuality would be reduced to a manifestation of universality. This parallels the worry that unless there is a noumenal, consciousness-independent realm, all objectivity would purely be a function of consciousness. The individual subject of practical philosophy must be independent from the universal moral law in a similar way to how the noumenal realm must be independent from consciousness in theoretical philosophy. And like the manner in which the cognized object of theoretical philosophy and the cognizing consciousness must share some identity within consciousness to guarantee their compatibility, the moral individual and the universal law of practical philosophy imply



identity—individually committed, particular actions are capable of embodying the universal law.

It can thus be argued that Hegel follows Kant in attempting to combine universality-emphasizing and individuality-emphasizing elements rather than to endorse either exclusively. Given his rejection of pure universalism, Hegel does not criticize Kant for committing to the difference between individual and universal. Doing so would mean that both either lacked concern with true universality or with individuality's role in norm-construction. Instead, Hegel criticizes Kant for insisting too much on the difference between the two, thereby undermining *any* identity relationship between them and thus the deduction of particularity. Still, in spirit, Hegel endorses Kant's ambition of combining the irreducible moments of universality, individuality and particularity within a single, identity-based account of rational action.

In the following part, it will be shown that in opposition to Aristotle's "pure," individuality-undermining universalism, Hegel's own account of rational action represents an attempt to faithfully adhere to Kant's aspiration of marrying universalism's irreducible universality of normativity with regard for irreducible individuality *while* enabling particularity as identity-based unity<sup>47</sup> of individual and universal. Hegel does so by defining a new kind of identity of the universal, particular and individual elements. This identity accommodates their difference in a way that guarantees the moments' irreducibility.

## II. Hegel's Account of Rational Agency

### *Hegel's Concept of Free Will*

Hegel maintains that Kant correctly identifies the conceptual structure of normatively valid—and thus concretely free—moral and political action in the following way: "we" as irreducible individuals (individuality)<sup>48</sup> choose those determined actions in our own way (particularity) that irreducibly universal reason (universality) requires. Hegel describes this concept in the *Encyclopedia's* section on "free mind"<sup>49</sup> and in the *Philosophy of Right's* account of "free will":<sup>50</sup>

[The notion of successful rational action, i.e., the will, expresses] the unity of both [universality and particularity]. It is particularity reflected into itself and so brought back to universality, i.e. it is *individuality*. It is the *self*-determination of the I, which means that at one and the same time the I posits itself as its own negative, i.e. as restricted and [particular], and yet remains with itself, i.e. in its self-identity and universality. It determines itself and yet at the same time binds itself together with itself.<sup>51</sup>

This parallels Kant's moral theory according to which rational action is defined as "we (individuals) choose to do (particular) what rationality (universal) requires." Following Kant, Hegel's empirical individuals could thus always choose and therefore will otherwise.<sup>52</sup> They can choose to follow the requirements of universal rationality or not. However, unlike Kant, Hegel emphasizes that the notion of successful rational action—when the individual actually chooses what rationality demands—implies that individuality and universality are not *first* explicitly different and *then* implicitly identified. Instead, Hegel argues that "we" as individuals, the universal and the particular *are always already the same in irreducibly differing from each other*. The real differences between individuality, universality and particularity are accommodated within the terms' overarching unity.

In the *Encyclopedia* and the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel accordingly argues that a conceptually sound account of rational agency must explain that all normatively valid (universality) action is committed by individuals (individuality) that choose to act in a determinate way (particularity). Together, the three elements constitute the "concept of the free will" so that in all rational acts, the universal concept is manifest in individual action in a determinate way: rational actions conform to the universal, are committed by individuals and have a particular form. Since the concept of the will and its three moments are identical, one can describe the concept from each moment's perspective<sup>53</sup>

1. from the perspective of the universal: universality particularizes itself into particular, freely choosing individuals who realize the universal in particular ways;<sup>54</sup>
2. from the perspective of the particular: particular choices result in particular actions that realize the universal and that are committed by particular individuals; and
3. from the perspective of the individual: individuals independently choose to realize the universal in particular ways (in accordance with their particular preferences and their own particularity).

In this "concept of the will," the individual is united with the universal since the individual's actions have universal validity: particular choices and actions articulate the universal *while* being committed by individuals. The irreducibility of the acting individual guarantees that there is universality-independent choice at play. The individual is not just a reducible instance of the pure universal and the particular action is not just the universal taking on particular form in the sense that the particular can be reduced to the (abstract) universal.<sup>55</sup> So as opposed an individuality- and particularity undermining universality, Hegel's speculative, "true" universality *retains* individuality and particularity.

Consequently, any particular choice and deed committed by individuals that is truly normatively valid and thus lives up to universality's requirements can be comprehended as individuality-accommodating in the sense that it could have been otherwise:

The I determines itself in so far as it is the relating of negativity to itself. As this self-relation, it is equally indifferent to this [particular] determinacy; it knows it as something which is its own, something which is only ideal . . . a mere *possibility* by which it is not constrained and in which it is confined only because it has put itself in it.<sup>56</sup>

The conceptual unity of (1) universal normativity and (2) particular action committed by (3) individuals that Hegel calls "the will" is thus threefold: (1) It is universal in virtue of being a form of unconditioned, universal truth. This enables it to carry the universalist, objective authority that Kant associated with the moral law. (2) It is particularized and concrete because of its form of being a determined choice and act. (3) It is individual in the sense of being committed by individuals that are not reducible to being mere instances of the universal.

This enables Hegel to claim that concrete, particular courses of action committed by irreducible individuals are reason-generating and normatively binding in virtue of their identity with universality. They are compatible with the universal without being reducible to it. Retaining their irreducible particularity, they also fulfill the demands of the universal. So particular actions and patterns of behavior are normative because they *are* universal normativity. In this identity, they differ from pure universality and individuality in virtue of their irreducibility and so retain their particular, determined character.

Since particular acts and universality are always already united in virtue of being distinct moments within the universality-containing concept of the free will, they are compatible with each other in the way universalism demands. However, since they remain *distinct* moments within this unity, individuality is retained in the way that a concern with individuality requires. This opens one window of explanation regarding Hegel's claim that we "know ourselves as ourselves"<sup>57</sup> when we choose to do what rationality demands of us, that is, when we act in a righteous, moral and ethical manner. When we as individuals commit to particular, normatively valid actions in this way, we live up to the standards of the very universality that forms part of the conceptual unity we as individuals always already participate in. In being with the universal, we are also with us.

Despite Hegel's rejection of the prioritization of the difference between individual and universal, his account of free will is thus structurally inspired by Kant's moral theory in its attempt to clearly differentiate the

universal and individual moments and to identify them *at the same time*. Hegel's Kantian respect for individuality's and universality's irreducibility also enables him to follow Kant in defending the universal moral equality of all individual rational beings in a way that Aristotle's virtue theory might not be able to do. To Kant and Hegel, all individuals are defined as profoundly non-particular in their equal moral and ethical standing. In contrast, Aristotle seems to consider particular traits when evaluating the relative virtuousness of individuals and institutions.<sup>58</sup>

Still, Hegel's difference-preserving identification of universality, individuality and particularity within the same concept of free will might make one wonder whether this reverts back to the universalist notion that the best "we" as individuals can do is to follow the universal's requirements, rendering "us" dependent on the universal and thus undermining our irreducible individuality? Alternatively: does "our" always-already obtaining identity with universality and particularity imply that "we" are but an instantiation or particularization of the universal so that "we" do not really exist but only universality does? Despite the identity between "us" as individuals and universality, Hegel insists that the irreducibility of individuality that he found in Kant's moral theory also applies to his own account: even if "we" as individuals stand in an identity-relationship to universal reason and do what it requires, we remain irreducibly individual in doing so.

As opposed to what happens in the case of (e.g., Aristotelian) "pure" universalism, where all individuality is explained in terms of universality, Hegel's account neither makes our individuality nor the particularity of action disappear in an all-determining universality. Instead, particularity and individuality are preserved within the overarching, dynamic unity motivated by the universal. And since "we" as individuals are profoundly identified with the universal, "we" do not depend on anything "else," "external" or "alien" when "we" do what the universal requires. Since we as individuals also fundamentally *are* the universal, we follow ourselves in following "it." Since the difference between "us" and the universal is embedded within a difference-accommodating identity, the notion of "dependence" does not apply. And because we remain individuals in being identical with the universal, we do not disappear as independent agents.<sup>59</sup>

In order to avoid Kant's prioritization of the difference between universal and individual over their identity and its particularity-eschewing effects, Hegel thus proposes to conceive of a 'new' kind of identity. This identity is able to accommodate both the irreducibility of universal, individual and particular *while* retaining their compatibility. It enables him to avoid (1) universalism's undermining of individuality, (2) the undermining of universality and (3) Kant's inability to link the two via particularity.

Hegel thus fundamentally agrees with Kant's motive of guaranteeing the irreducibility of both individuality and universality against universalism

(and thus also Aristotle). However, Hegel does not follow Kant in prioritizing the terms' difference over their identity. Instead, the identity Hegel proposes is difference-preserving and does not contradict the difference on the same logical plane. Instead, Hegel's 'new' "speculative"<sup>60</sup> identity embeds the irreducible differences of the terms within itself.

As will be shown in part III, the general metaphysical justification that Hegel provides in support of his account of rational agency by appealing to the "metaphysics of the concept" puts him at direct odds with Aristotle's notion of virtuous action and its foundation in universalist metaphysics of substance. Furthermore, undermining the case for Hegel's supposedly non-Kantian perfectionism, Kant can be shown to share the perfectionist concern with human flourishing that Robert Stern associates with Aristotle. Meanwhile, Kant's account of account of legal, moral and virtuous action can be argued to resemble an immanent purpose-like "general kind" under which individuals fall and which they ought to realize. Finally, Hegel aligns with Kant against Aristotle in defining the highest end of moral and ethical action as "duty" and not as "moral happiness," or *eudaimonia*.

### III. Hegel's General Metaphysics and Hegel's Aristotle

#### *Hegel's General Metaphysics of the Concept*

Throughout his analysis of rational agency in terms of universality, particularity and individuality, Hegel emphasizes that the "concept of the will" is a metaphysical concept and thus a more concrete form of general metaphysical truth, that is, "freedom" or "the concept as such." This is more closely analyzed in the *Science of Logic*'s "subjective logic," where Hegel describes what he takes to be the most general possible account of metaphysical truth as such. He calls it "the concept" and describes its relationship to, for example, Aristotelian substance thus:

In the *concept*, . . . the kingdom of *freedom* is disclosed. The concept is free because the *identity that exists in and for itself* and constitutes the necessity of substance exists at the same time as sublated or as *positedness*, and this positedness, as self-referring, is that very identity [of the concept]. [T]he [concept's] "*originary fact*" is "*originary*" because it is a "*self-causing fact*," and this is the *substance that has been let go freely into the concept*.<sup>61</sup>

According to Hegel, all substance metaphysics—and thus also Aristotle's—defines identity as something that obtains between differentiated entities, for example, "substance and accident" or "cause and effect." It depends on two presupposed relata of which one is privileged over the other. For example, "necessity" implies that there are two different relata

that are identical so that when one is, the other must be. However, in Hegel's metaphysics of the concept, this relation is inverted. First, there is identity, and within this identity, the different relata are situated ("posited"). In the concept, identity is not a function of relata anymore, but the relata are now a function of identity. While in substance's necessity, each relatum related to "something else" via identity, in the concept's freedom, the concept relates to itself when the relata relate to each other. While cause and effect were defined as different so that the cause caused "something else," the concept causes itself because everything posited and differentiated *is* itself.

In contrast, according to substance metaphysics, one prioritized form of substance as "cause" causes another as "effect." The effect is a subordinate and thus a dependent form of substance. The subordinated form is only explicable in terms of the prioritized form. Since substance as cause is prioritized over the effect, the effect can only be explained with reference to the cause so that the cause is truer than the effect, the effect is parasitical on the cause. The effect truly *is* the cause, only in passive form. Substance (universal) as cause thus causes the effect (individual) as something that is *reducible* to the privileged universal. For instance, the effect depends on the cause, the accident and modus depend on substance etc. According to substance metaphysics, nothing that is caused or that exists is thus caused or exists by itself. Nothing is independent and truly individual. Or, rather, since everything ultimately *is* universal substance, substance as cause causes itself—or posits itself by accident—as *if it were not causing or positing itself* without enabling the independence or irreducibility of what is posited or caused. Hegel states as much when he defines *substance* in this way:

Substance, as this unity of being and reflection, is essentially the *shining* and the *positedness* of itself. The shining is a *self-referring* shining, thus it *is*; this being is substance as such. Conversely, this being is only the self-identical *positedness*, and as such it is *shining totality, accidentality*.<sup>62</sup>

In contrast, Hegel's concept-metaphysics imply that all particular and individual determinations are independent and irreducible *in virtue of being of and within the concept*. Whatever the universal concept posits is explicitly itself *in being* irreducibly particular and individual. So in positing itself individual and particular, the universal concept makes explicit that the particular and individual are independent and irreducible. Since all moments are of and within the concept, they relate to "themselves" when they relate to each other. And they do so without losing their independent status within the overall concept's unity. The distinct and irreducible moments particularity, universality and individuality are all of the concept's speculative unity. The individual *is* the particular, which *is*

the universal, while none of the moments loses its distinct status of being what it is:

[The] concept . . . contains the three moments of *universality*, *particularity*, and *singularity*. The difference and the determinations which the concept gives itself in its process of distinguishing constitute the sides formerly called *positedness*. Since this positedness is in the concept identical with being-in-and-for-itself, each of the moments is just as much the *whole* concept as it is *determinate concept* and a *determination* of the concept.<sup>63</sup>

This helps explain the conceptual structure of Hegel's Kant-inspired account of rational action, that is, what Hegel calls "the concept of the will."<sup>64</sup> Just like the general concept's individuality unites universality and particularity, so "the concept of the will" implies that determinate, yet universally valid actions are committed by irreducible individuals. And like general particularity unites universality and individuality, the concept of the will's particularity means that determinate, rational action is something that individuals do when they enact the requirements of the universal. Similarly, like the general concept's universality informs general particularity and general individuality, so the universal requirements of legal, moral and ethical action are manifest in determinate, individual rational action. While each element implies the others within the general concept, so each element implies the others in the concept of the will. Hegel's claims about the structure of practical rationality are thus rooted in his general metaphysics of the concept.

### *Hegel's Aristotle*

Hegel labels these metaphysics of the concept the metaphysics of "freedom"<sup>65</sup> because in defining its moment's universality, particularity and individuality, the concept is explicitly self-positing and thus not "other-referring" like substance when it manifests as substance and modus (or accident) or as cause and effect. Within the concept, the moments remain independent and distinct *while* being united so there is no externality or dependence: the concept and its moments are all there is, and all that exists results from the concept's activity. According to Hegel, it is this *independence within a self-sufficient unity* that prevents the concept's moments from falling victim to the kind of reduction of individuality and particularity to universality that he associates with Aristotle's universalist substance metaphysics.<sup>66</sup>

This reading is supported by Hegel's own interpretation of Aristotle, according to which Aristotle's substance is determined in several different ways. Hegel's Aristotle identifies substance's main categorial shapes as "accidents," "immanent purpose,"<sup>67</sup> the mutually dependent "matter



and form,” “unrealized potential” (*dynamis*), “self-positing activity” (*energeia*) and successful self-manifestation, that is, “entelechy” (*entelecheia*).<sup>68</sup> However, in all these configuration, Hegel argues, substance remains with itself as “unmoved and moving,”<sup>69</sup> active, self-concretizing universal.<sup>70</sup> This is most explicit in its highest categorial determination, where substance is “absolute substance.”<sup>71</sup> As such, substance is “the *unmoved*, the unmoveable and eternal, but at the same time, it is actively *moving*, pure activity, *actus purus*.”<sup>72</sup> Hegel argues that this closely resembles what he calls the metaphysical, “absolute idea” and accordingly states that “there is no higher idealism”<sup>73</sup> than Aristotle’s.

However, for the notion of individuality—and thus also for rationally acting individuals—substance’s privileging of universality entails that “we” as cognizing and acting individuals are “posited,” “accidents” or “effects” of universal substance:

Substance is power . . . that posits *determinations* and *distinguishes them from itself*. As self-referring in its determining, it is *itself* that which it posits as a negative or makes into a *positedness*. This positedness is . . . sublated substantiality, the merely posited, the *effect*; the substance that exists for itself is, however, *cause*.<sup>74</sup>

This also applies to “us” as rational individuals. “We,” including our (at least partly) immaterial “souls,”<sup>75</sup> are universal substance’s accident, instances of its form–matter–unity, its self-manifestation or its effect. “We” as seeming individuals are a determination of universal substance: “That [the soul] is as [substance] is clear: the [substance] is the cause of the being of each thing, living is the being of living things, and soul is the cause and governing principle of these.”<sup>76</sup> So “we” and our “individuality,” including our soul, are the causal universal substance itself,<sup>77</sup> albeit in the form of “effect,” “accident” or “manifestation” and imbued with a distinct purpose, such as self-sustenance, procreation, virtuous social and “individual” behavior and a drive for different kinds of knowledge.<sup>78</sup> This renders universal substance the real “agent” so that “our” independent individuality-based freedom is undermined by “our” status as posits of substance’s self-determining activity:<sup>79</sup>

[The] activity [of Aristotle’s substance (*energeia*)] is also change but it is change posited within the universal and so it is self-identical change. It is a kind of determining, namely a determining of itself [*Sichselbstbestimmen*].<sup>80</sup>

So although Aristotle insists in his ethics that there is individual choice<sup>81</sup> and that “we” can always decide not to follow<sup>82</sup> the mind-orienting, always-already implied requirements of virtuous behavior,<sup>83</sup> Hegel argues that the relative individual independence that this view implies cannot

be defended with reference to the substance metaphysics that ground them.<sup>84</sup> For Aristotle, “we” remain dependent configurations of universal substance<sup>85</sup> so when “we” act, it is truly universal substance acting.<sup>86</sup>

For Hegel’s Aristotle, “individuality” is always substance’s universality in disguise so that individuality can be reduced to universality. Aristotle’s universalist substance metaphysics thus lack the irreducibility-guaranteeing difference between universal and individual that defines Kant’s philosophy of (self-)consciousness and his moral theory and that inspired Hegel’s metaphysics of the concept. Unlike Hegel’s Kant-inspired metaphysics of the concept and the concept of free will, Aristotle’s substance metaphysics are incapable of retaining the moments of individuality and particularity in their irreducibility *within* the notion of the overarching universal.

### *Perfectionism*

However, Robert Stern has argued<sup>87</sup> that Hegel’s metaphysics resembles Aristotle’s in another crucial sense. Like Aristotle, Hegel is a “perfectionist”<sup>88</sup> because “he has a notion of a flourishing nature that must be achieved.”<sup>89</sup> Hegel supposedly states this in the *Science of Logic*’s section on judgment, where according to the judgment of the concept “Xs are good because they fall under a certain kind.”<sup>90</sup> This means that “evaluative judgments only make sense by bringing in a consideration of what it is to be a properly functioning member of a kind, which realizes itself in this way.”<sup>91</sup> Just like Aristotle assigns a certain “given” purpose to individuals, for example, plant and animal life has the telos to subsist and procreate, humans have the purpose to sustain themselves, procreate, cognize, act virtuously etc. According to Robert Stern, Hegel’s theory of rational agency resembles Aristotle’s in this way:

(1) Human nature consists in rational agency, that is, in exercising the capacity to guide behaviour by practical reason. (2) The human good consists in the full actualization of this capacity in fulfilling our other capacities. (3) The virtues are the different ways of actualizing this capacity.<sup>92</sup>

What makes Stern’s Hegel an Aristotelian “naturalist of sorts”<sup>93</sup> is his commitment to the notion of a virtuous life that humans must realize—although not understood as Aristotelian “biological”<sup>94</sup> entities but as Kantian “free agents.”<sup>95</sup>

However, if Hegel’s reading of Aristotle’s substance metaphysics is correct, the problem with Aristotle is not that man is primarily a biological being but that the notions “independent rational agency,” “actively fulfilling or actualizing capacities,” “guiding one’s behavior by practical reason” and “being a free agent” are undermined by Aristotle’s substance-metaphysics

that define the telos of man as a “given” rather than consciousness- (Kant) or *Geist*-based (Hegel) and thus at least partly self-positing reality like Kant and Hegel do. According to Hegel’s Aristotle, there truly is no “us” in the sense of substance-independent, individual agents who can properly define their own lives or try to live up to the purpose that substance’s telos “prescribes.” So while Aristotle might claim that individuals have free and independent choice with regard to living up to their immanent telos, he cannot justify this with reference to his general metaphysics. Hegel thinks that only his own, Kant-inspired metaphysics of the concept can ensure this.

In this context, one might wonder whether Hegel’s remarks about ethical life being the “substance”<sup>96</sup> and individuals initially being its “accidents”<sup>97</sup> seem to invoke Aristotelian metaphysics. For example, in the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel claims,

Hence the ethical order is freedom or the will in and for itself as what is objective, a circle of necessity whose moments are the ethical powers which govern the life of individuals. To these powers individuals are related as accidents to substance, and it is in individuals that these powers are represented, have the shape of appearance, and become actualized.<sup>98</sup>

However, Hegel is adamant that by accommodating individual freedom, his account of ethical life goes beyond substance metaphysics:

[T]he person, as thinking intelligence, is aware of [ethical] substance as his own essence, ceases in this disposition to be an accident of substance; he views substance, his absolute final end in actuality, as something already achieved in the here and now, yet also produces this end by his activity, but produces it as something that simply is.<sup>99</sup>

So while Hegel thinks that Aristotle was right *in principle* by hinting at the importance of the universal as guiding individual ethical choice and action, only Hegel’s Kant-inspired metaphysics of the concept are capable of properly articulating the compatibility of both, universal ethical validity and concept-based and thus uncoerced individual choice.

Furthermore, the distinction between Kant’s self-determination-oriented morality on one hand, and Aristotle’s perfectionism with its notion of an immanent telos on the other, can be questioned with reference to the role that practical reason plays in Kant’s account of rational action. For Kant, the structure of practical reason is akin to a universal, consciousness-immanent “purpose” that is found within every rational being. It inescapably defines who we as conscious individuals are and how we ought to be. This casts doubt on Kant’s “anti-realist”<sup>100</sup> opposition to “perfectionism.”<sup>101</sup> If “perfectionism” is defined as a theory that

defines how a “perfect” or “good” human life is led or how a perfectly rational human being ought to act, then Kant’s preliminary *Groundwork* can be consulted because it describes what kind of maxims one ought to live by to achieve perfection in a humanly possible way, for example, respecting personhood, property, truth and so on. Also Kant’s unapologetically universalistic *Metaphysics of Morals* provide a rather vast amount of details on what a “perfect” human life and society would look like, for example, a society where “where everybody’s wilfulness is compatible with everyone else’s,” where there is a rational legal framework structuring private property, marriage, real estate ownership, parenting, the relationship between state and citizen including penal code, the relationship between states and so on.<sup>102</sup>

And in the same *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant provides details on what kind of virtues a “perfect” human life ought to freely seek to embody, such as “being an honest person,” “defending one’s worth as human beings in front of others,” “not treating others unjustly or harming them,” “entering into a society where everyone receives what he deserves,”<sup>103</sup> “acting in accordance with one’s naturally given freedom and equality and treating others accordingly”<sup>104</sup> and “pursuing self-perfection” such as “moderation of physical desires”, including pleasure<sup>105</sup> and consumption,<sup>106</sup> living honestly, avoiding avarice,<sup>107</sup> submissiveness,<sup>108</sup> furthering the happiness of others,<sup>109</sup> loving others, being grateful,<sup>110</sup> empathetic,<sup>111</sup> avoiding arrogance, not talking badly about others and not ridiculing others,<sup>112</sup> among others. Also Kant’s individuals can thus be argued to fall under the consciousness-implicit, “general kind” of rational agency and can be evaluated with reference to the degree that their behavior instantiates it.

So even if Hegel’s critique of Kant is true and Kant was not able to *conceptually deduce* determinations of rational action from the thought of pure reason and duty for duty’s sake, Kant does provide a substantial amount of particular determinations that he considers to be compatible with the demands of universality, human flourishing and a “perfect” and good human life. More precisely, Kant’s own “doctrine of virtue,”<sup>113</sup> including its claims that one ought to ensure one’s self-perfection<sup>114</sup> as well one’s own and others’ welfare and happiness<sup>115</sup> thus seems to require individual and collective “flourishing” just like Aristotle’s ethics do.

In the context of practical philosophy, the most relevant variance between Kant’s and Hegel’s accounts of moral and ethical behavior on the one hand, and Aristotle’s *eudaimonia*-oriented ethics, on the other can instead to be found in the status of “moral happiness”<sup>116</sup> and its relation to duty.

Against Aristotle, Kant insists that rational action is committed not *for the sake of* “moral happiness”<sup>117</sup> but, rather, that moral happiness might well be a side product of duty-oriented, rational action.<sup>118</sup> Even if moral happiness necessarily accompanies moral and virtuous behavior,

such behavior is not engaged in for the sake of the end “happiness” but for the sake of duty.

Hegel follows Kant in this respect when he relies on the notions of “duties”<sup>119</sup> and “rights”<sup>120</sup> in his description of ethical life. So although Hegel frequently compares his own account of “ethical life” to Aristotle’s notions of virtuous individual and community, Hegel follows Kant in separating ethical action as an end in itself from “happiness”<sup>121</sup> or even “moral happiness” as final end of ethical conduct. Just like Kant’s virtuous agent, Hegel’s ethical individual *might* be at ease with him- or herself and content with his or her place in the world. But given its metaphysical status as truly universal, such “moral” or “ethical happiness” is not the highest end in itself. If it were, it would be tainted by the particular requirements that any particular moral subject’s happiness depends on.<sup>122</sup> Even moral and thus universality-related happiness is not truly universal because each particular individual’s happiness is different. To be truly universal and compatible with *any* individuality, the final end of action must be the very ethical duty that is the same for all individuals. At best, moral happiness is thus a side product of realizing the truly highest and properly universal end that consists of being a moral and ethical agent. So unlike Aristotle, who defines *eudaimonia* in Kant’s sense of “moral happiness”<sup>123</sup> as the final end of human action, Kant and Hegel define righteous, moral and ethical duty-bound action as the final end.

Hegel’s proximity to Kant rather than to Aristotle is further illustrated by Hegel’s placing of the description of the exercise of practical reason in the realm of the “philosophy of Geist” rather than the “philosophy of nature.” According to both Kant and Hegel, “ethical”<sup>124</sup> or “virtuous”<sup>125</sup> action is a distinctly spiritual, that is, mind-related phenomenon and thus one aspect of a wider metaphysics defined by a notion of “consciousness” (Kant) or *Geist* (Hegel). Both of these imply that there is no notion of a consciousness- or mind-independent reality and are founded on a notion of irreducible individuality.<sup>126</sup> Given Aristotle’s commitment to universalist substance-metaphysics, his analysis of rational individual and collective action lacks such appreciation of individual freedom.

And while it is true that Kant does not engage in direct descriptions of consciousness-independent, metaphysical structures as such or discusses the metaphysical structure of nature in the way Aristotle and Hegel do, this methodological difference between Kant’s transcendental idealism on one hand, and Aristotle’s realism and Hegel’s absolute idealism on the other, has no substantial bearing on the philosophical discussion of practical rationality: all three authors are concerned with the actions of finite, rational beings. Like Hegel’s and Aristotle’s analyses of rational action, so Kant’s philosophical claims about practical rationality in the second critique, the *Groundwork*, the *Metaphysics of Morals* and elsewhere are aspiring to express universally valid, a priori categorial determinations that define the ideal and telos for the behavior of all finite rational

beings,<sup>127</sup> including their self-perfection and flourishing. This raises a larger set of questions about the relationship among Kant's transcendental idealism, Aristotle's metaphysics and Hegel's absolute idealism.

#### IV. Hegel's Absolute Idealism

##### *Geist* and Nature as Forms of the Idea

According to Hegel, all philosophy is idealism,<sup>128</sup> including Kant's and Aristotle's, in the following sense: it knowingly or unknowingly describes the categorial configurations of unconditioned, universal truth. Hegel calls this "the idea" and argues that it has three forms:

[The science of philosophy] falls into three parts:

- I. The Logic, the science of the Idea in and for itself.
- II. The Philosophy of Nature, as the science of the Idea in its otherness.
- III. The Philosophy of [*Geist*], as the Idea that returns into itself out of its otherness.<sup>129</sup>

The idea and its configurations are always described from the perspective of the idea's unconditioned truth itself. Philosophy is an aspect of one of the idea's three configurations, that is, *Geist*: only finite, minded beings can engage in philosophy. At the same time, its descriptions go beyond the confines of *Geist* when it describes the metaphysical "idea as such" (*Logic*) and "the idea as nature" (*philosophy of nature*).<sup>130</sup> It seems that this is only possible because the same metaphysical idea that manifests itself in *Geist* also manifests itself in pure thought and in nature.<sup>131</sup> Overall, Hegel thus aims to provide an account of general metaphysics and a metaphysics of nature and of the metaphysics of *Geist* from an inherently unconditioned perspective.

However, Hegel would argue that Kant posits the perspective of the "appearance of *Geist*," that is, of finite, consciousness-based rationality as fundamental. For Hegel's Kant, all philosophical claims are made from the perspective of fundamentally finite, world-confronting and embodied (self-)consciousness.<sup>132</sup> From Hegel's point of view, Kant thus confines himself to providing a "philosophy of *Geist* as consciousness" *from the exclusive perspective of Geist as consciousness*. While this means that Kant is still doing "philosophy" in Hegel's sense insofar as he describes the idea by uncovering universal and unconditionally valid categorial determinations, Kant does so from the "wrong" perspective and with a limited scope, failing to conceptually capture, for example, the *Logic*'s general metaphysical determinations, the entire philosophy of nature, *Geist*'s soul-focused anthropology, a direct account of *Geist* as such and a systematic rendering of art, religion and philosophy as forms of absolute *Geist*.

In contrast, Hegel thinks that his own definition of philosophy is able to explain the unapologetically universalist ambitions of Aristotle, Kant and Hegel that Robert Stern convincingly defends:

[I]t is still the case that the fundamental structure of the will that is presented in the Introduction to [the *Philosophy of Right*] is the same and fixed, as are the fundamental social structures which Hegel takes to realize that will; they are therefore not warranted merely as the form of institutional structure that best fit the conception of our nature prevalent at that historical period. . . . I would argue instead that the importance of history for Hegel lies in helping us see how this form of self-understanding has been developed, and thus how this distinctively modern conception of the will as a balance of “universal,” “particular,” and “individual” moments has emerged; but this is to make history the *ratio cognoscendi* not the *ratio essendi* of what it is to be a free rational agent.<sup>133</sup>

Since all of Hegel’s claims about general metaphysics, nature and *Geist* lay claim to being metaphysically and universally valid, this also applies to the categories deduced from the concept of rational action, that is, Hegel’s claims about legal, moral and ethical action.<sup>134</sup> Hegel’s philosophical self-understanding thus supports Stern’s reading that Hegel does not think that the institutions he describes in the *Encyclopedia*’s objective *Geist* and the *Philosophy of Right* are themselves dependent on historical, social or other empirical circumstance. Instead, Hegel maintains that the particularized, normative universality of the free will as “right”<sup>135</sup> and “objective *Geist*”<sup>136</sup> is manifest in empirically different social, historical and pragmatic contexts *without ontologically depending on these*.<sup>137</sup> Particular and individual manifestations of truth are aspects of the truth that is *Geist*. But since the truth as unity of universality, particularity and individuality *contains* these within its unity, the truth does not *depend* on them as if they limited it on the same logical plane. So while the idea of right is not true unless it is manifest empirically, that is, in finite, particular and individual form, the specific circumstance of its manifestation has no causal effect on what the idea of right is.

However, while Hegel shares these universalist aspirations with Aristotle,<sup>138</sup> also Kant insists on the universal validity of his conceptual analyses of cognition, action, aesthetic experience, natural science and rational sociopolitical life and their immanent presence within empirical reality.<sup>139</sup> At least according to Kant himself, his commitment to transcendental idealism does not affect the universal scope and non-relative status of his philosophical claims.

### *The Unconditioned Universality of Philosophy*

Still, stressing the parallel between Hegel’s and Aristotle’s philosophical projects, it seems fair to say that even if all of nature and “we” as finite



rational beings ceased to empirically exist, the structures Aristotle and Hegel describe would still have to be metaphysically valid. So if there were to come any “new” empirical reality into being, it would have to follow the categorial demands that Aristotle or Hegel specifies: as soon as there empirically exists any natural reality, it would be ordered along the categorial lines of the philosophy of nature/the *Physics* and *Metaphysics*. And once there empirically exists any mind-related reality, it would have to display the categorial determinations Hegel specifies in the philosophy of *Geist* or Aristotle in his treatises on the soul, ethics, politics etc. In this “realist” sense, these categorial structures are “always there whether we notice them or not.”<sup>140</sup>

However, at least with regards to all consciousness-relevant categories, the same seems to be true of Kant’s philosophy. Like Aristotle and Hegel, Kant insists on providing a strictly a priori categorial analysis of how *any* empirically existing, (practical) rationality must be in order to qualify as such.<sup>141</sup> So if all now empirically existing rational beings ceased to exist and a new finite form of rational being emerged in the course of natural history, its rationality would have to be structured in the way Kant describes in the three critiques, the *Groundwork* and the *Metaphysics of Morals*, among others. In this sense, the a priori, philosophically discussed categories that Kant describes are “always there”—whether we are empirically aware of them or not. They are necessary, universal, objective and a priori insofar as all empirically existing, rational life must be how they describe. Otherwise, Kant’s philosophy would fall victim to the same self-contradiction he mocks empiricism for and that can be represented thus:<sup>142</sup>

- (1) Empiricism is (necessarily) true
- (2) Is an empirical and thus contingent statement

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(C) (1) is necessary and it is not necessary

Similar to Aristotle’s *de Anima*<sup>143</sup> and Hegel’s philosophy of *Geist*, Kant’s three critiques thus analyze how finite rationality always is and must be to qualify as rational at all.<sup>144</sup> In the context of practical philosophy, this means that Kant’s works on practical philosophy, such as the *Metaphysics of Morals*, describe the rationality-implied, necessary way of rational life all rational beings always had to, have to and will have to pursue, whether they empirically know or do so or not.

The difference between Kant and Aristotle thus seems to lie less in the domain of beings relevant in the context of practical philosophy or in the universal status or level of particular detail of the philosophical claims made. Instead, it appears to be a question of philosophical method: Kant argues from an empirically unconditioned, universally valid yet irreducibly (self-)consciousness-based perspective when he makes philosophical

claims about the categorial structure of cognition, action, aesthetic experience etc. In contrast, Aristotle and Hegel seem to associate the philosophical point of view with an “infinite perspective” that is able to describe the purely metaphysical as well as metaphysical order of non-spiritual nature.<sup>145</sup>

However, while this difference in perspective has a bearing on the respective philosopher’s ability to provide a “direct,” that is, non-(self-) consciousness-mediated, philosophical discussion of pure metaphysics and of nature’s metaphysical structure, its impact on the claims made in the context of consciousness-related and thus practical philosophy is less obvious. By definition, Aristotle’s, Kant’s and Hegel’s claims about rational agency concern finite, rational beings and their “perfect” and “good” behavior, irrespective of whether these claims are made from a “finite” or an “infinite” philosophical point of view. And should Hegel’s definition of philosophy as “science of the idea”<sup>146</sup> be correct, Aristotle, Kant and Hegel are all “idealists” insofar as their concern lies with what they regard as universal, unconditioned truth.

### *Is Hegel a Naturalist?*

If the methodological—rather than the structural—difference between Kant’s consciousness-based idealism and Aristotle’s “infinite” idealism is not as decisive as initially assumed, one might wonder if Hegel were to accept label of “naturalism”<sup>147</sup> for himself?

Given Hegel’s commitment to “the idea,” it seems that this would only be possible if “nature” were to be defined in correspondence to what Hegel calls “the (metaphysical) idea” and its three forms, for example, as “abstract nature” (Logic), “first nature” (nature) and “second nature” (*Geist*). “Naturalism” might apply to Hegel and Aristotle against Kant if it is to refer to the fact that Hegel rejects Kant and follows Aristotle in denying any radically transcendent, unknowable, non-particularized or individualized universals or principles such as “things in themselves,” or “the noumenal,” and thus rejects anything “supernatural” in that sense.

However, given the label’s at least etymological proximity to physicalism and natural scientism, calling Aristotle a “naturalist” will provoke the question, “How can his universality-aspiring claims about the non-material soul, about universal and active, self-positing substance and an immaterial and immortal, non-human god or lower-level, celestial ‘movers’<sup>148</sup> be successfully squared with the label naturalism?” Similarly, Hegel’s “naturalism” would include claims about the existence of entities that are discontinuous with the methods and claims of most modern natural science. Amongst these are atemporally valid, purely metaphysical structures, metaphysical entities that are unconditioned by time and space and even manifest *as* these<sup>149</sup> and observable-nature-and mindedness-causing metaphysical principles that are responsible for the

existence of non-material souls,<sup>150</sup> non-material consciousness and non-material aspects of mindedness.<sup>151</sup>

In this context, it seems worth considering that Hegel's self-titled "absolute idealism" can be described as explicitly seeking to undermine the dichotomy between a "metaphysics of nature" and a "metaphysics of *Geist*" and thus between "realism" or "naturalism," on one hand, and "spiritualism," on the other. According to Hegel, the irreducible conceptual difference that exists between the metaphysics of nature and of *Geist* entails that neither term can be rendered intelligible without the respective other: nature is "non-*Geist*" and can only be comprehended as such while the same goes for *Geist* as "non-nature."<sup>152</sup> So genuinely non-natural reality can only be comprehended as *geistige* while non-*geistige* reality can only be comprehended as natural and neither can be reduced to the other.<sup>153</sup>

For example, while "we" as *geistige* beings have bodies, drives, confront a seemingly natural world, all "natural" aspects about us are always already sublated within the mindedness (*Geistigkeit*) we embody. For *Geist*, everything seemingly natural that we confront is an aspect of *Geistigkeit*. Similarly, animals' "simple souls" and non-*geistige* subjectivity lack the qualities of being subject to self-conscious reflection and -modification, coexisting with notions of epistemic and practical normativity and the power of free thought and will within the same *Geist*. Hegel thus insists against a notion of an all-embracing "naturalism" or "realism" that the category of nature implies its own negation in the form of *Geist*, which, in turn, goes beyond the confines of what a "philosophy of nature" and any natural science can meaningfully investigate. This also undermines the case for labeling Hegel a "spiritualist" who commits to the notion that ultimately, everything is *Geist*.<sup>154</sup>

However, some commentators have argued that there is also the option of a "liberal naturalism"<sup>155</sup> that acknowledges the irreducible character of natural and non-natural, that is, spiritual or mind-related reality. This naturalism is non-reductive with regard to distinctly mental or *geistige* properties, and it is "naturalistic" in the sense that it rejects any transcendental reality that is beyond philosophical thought. However, simply its name "naturalism" seems to contradict its conceptually implied acknowledgment of non-natural, that is, *geistige*, reality. For the name "naturalism" implies that everything that exists, is natural—so that *geistige* reality is a subset of natural reality or subject to natural science. A "liberal naturalism"<sup>156</sup> that does not equate to physicalism or natural scientism in the sense that it does not believe that everything that exists can be described by (the perfect) natural science would then have to explain why it appears to label an entire realm of existence "natural" although this realm is discontinuous with natural science.

In contrast, Hegel's notion of "absolute idealism" has the advantage of remaining neutral—also in name—with regard to the priority and irreducibility of both nature and *Geist*. While both nature and *Geist* are

idea, neither can be subsumed under the other's heading.<sup>157</sup> Since everything that is natural or spiritual can be traced back to the metaphysical, "absolute idea",<sup>158</sup> all that metaphysically and empirically exists, is ideal. Everything empirical and thus finite is a function and expression of the true infinite, that is, the idea, which unites finitude (objectivity) and non-finitude (subjectivity) within itself.

But what does the label "absolute" mean in this context? Hegel seems to assign to it at least two senses. First, he defines the metaphysical idea as a self-referential and thus "absolute" unity of "subjectivity" and "objectivity."<sup>159</sup> The notion of the idea thus implies that "the concept" as truth-defining, dynamic metaphysical principle ("subjective concept") manifests itself as objective reality. In conceptually referring to objectivity, the concept refers to itself and is absolute. Second, Hegel argues that the notion of "philosophy" means that the metaphysical idea in the form of *Geist* comprehends itself in nature and *Geist*.<sup>160</sup> This makes philosophy the idea's "absolute" self-comprehension. Instead of siding with the "realist" ("all is objective") or "naturalist" ("all is nature") against the "spiritualist" ("all is *Geist*"),<sup>161</sup> the "subjective idealist" ("all that is and is thought is related to consciousness"), Hegel thus seeks to unite a "realist" philosophy of nature with an "idealist" philosophy of *Geist* within a philosophical account of absolute idealism.

At least in this sense, it thus seems more faithful to Hegel's self-understanding to label him an "absolute idealist" rather than an Aristotelian—or neutral—"naturalist"<sup>162</sup> or "realist." And since Hegel's all-informing and individuality-preserving metaphysics of the concept are structurally based on Kant's accounts of cognition and rational action, Hegel is a distinctly post-Kantian thinker. This appears equally valid in the context of general metaphysics (*Logic*—absolute idea) as in the contexts of the metaphysics of nature (*philosophy of nature*—idea as nature) and *Geist* (philosophy of *Geist*, philosophy as *Geist*'s absolute self-comprehension), of which his metaphysics of rational agency and his metaphysics of righteous, moral and ethical action form a part.

## V. Conclusion

Despite Hegel's rejection of the consciousness-based perspective characteristic of transcendental idealism, his absolute idealism is decidedly post-Kantian. While Robert Stern convincingly stresses Hegel's universalist ambitions in the face of individualist, recognition- or pragmatism-oriented readings, his suggestion that Hegel is best understood as an Aristotelian "naturalist" can be challenged on various counts. Instead, Hegel should be labeled a post-Kantian "absolute idealist" rather than "spiritualist," or Aristotelian "naturalist" or "realist" because Hegel (1) models his own account of rational agency on Kant's analysis of the relationship between universality and individuality, (2) rejects Aristotelian

substance-metaphysics by endorsing the Kant-inspired “metaphysics of the concept,” (3) follows Kant in prioritizing acting out of duty over Aristotelian “moral happiness” and (4) undercuts the metaphysical idealism–naturalism dichotomy by deducing nature and *Geist* from the “absolute idea.” If correct, this reading enables a reevaluation of Hegel’s philosophical methodology in comparison to Aristotle’s and opens new vistas onto the relationship between Kant’s and Hegel’s idealisms.

## Notes

- 1 The ideas presented in this chapter have been shaped in exchange with several friends and colleagues to whom I am deeply grateful. I would like to explicitly thank (in alphabetical order) Dr. James Gledhill, Dr. David Merrill, Dr. Felix Stein, Prof. Robert Stern and Prof. Christopher Yeomans for commenting on earlier drafts of this chapter.
- 2 Robert Stern, “Freedom, Self-Legislation and Morality in Kant and Hegel: Constructivist vs. Realist Accounts,” in Espen Hammer (ed.), *German Idealism: Contemporary Perspectives*. (London: Routledge, 2007), 245–267, Robert Stern, *Understanding Moral Obligation*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), Robert Stern, *Kantian Ethics: Value, Agency and Obligation*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), Robert Stern, “Why Hegel Now (Again)—and in What Form?” *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement*, vol. 78 (2016): 187–210, Robert Stern, “Freedom, Norms, and Nature in Hegel: Self-Legislation or Self-Realization?” in James Kreines and Rahel Zuckert (eds.), *Hegel on Philosophy in History*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 88–105.
- 3 Stern, *Freedom, Norms and Nature*, 88.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 90.
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury, *Leviathan or the Matter, Forme, & Power of a Common-Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civill*. (St. Pauls Churchyard: Andrew Crooke, 1651).
- 7 One might thus say that Hegel credited Kant with the to date most advanced philosophical rendering of the concept of free will that some think has originated in Christian theology. (Cf. Pinkard, *Hegel’s Naturalism*, 17.)
- 8 Cf. Stern, *Freedom, Norms, and Nature*, 104.
- 9 Cf. Yeomans, *Expansion*, 20.
- 10 Immanuel Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals* (1785), trans. Thomas Kingsmill Abbott. (Project Gutenberg, 2004), 10. Hegel follows Kant in defining reason (rather than nature or god or society) as the only possible source of legitimate moral and ethical obligation. Still, for both Kant and Hegel, reason can take a society-defining form, that is, when society is rationally ordered. Cf. Stern, *Understanding Moral Obligation*, 153.
- 11 Cf. “[f]or the will stands between its a priori principle, which is formal, and its a posteriori spring, which is material, as between two roads, and as it must be determined by something, it that it must be determined by the formal principle of volition when an action is done from duty, in which case every material principle has been withdrawn from it.” (Kant, *Fundamental Principles*, 8)
- 12 Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. and trans. Allen Wood. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 5.
- 13 Cf. Christopher Yeomans, *The Expansion of Autonomy: Hegel’s Pluralistic Philosophy of Action*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 16.

- 14 "In the order of efficient causes we assume ourselves free, in order that in the order of ends we may conceive ourselves as subject to moral laws: and we afterwards conceive ourselves as subject to these laws, because we have attributed to ourselves freedom of will." (Kant, *Fundamental Principles*, 32)
- 15 What Kant calls "hypothetical imperatives" (Kant, *Fundamental Principles*, 15). Cf. "If now the action is good only as a means to something else, then the imperative is hypothetical; if it is conceived as good in itself and consequently as being necessarily the principle of a will which of itself conforms to reason, then it is categorical." (Kant, *Fundamental Principles*, 15)
- 16 Kant, *Fundamental Principles*, 28.
- 17 Ibid., 6.
- 18 Ibid., 9.
- 19 Ibid., 18, 19.
- 20 Cf. "[s]o act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as means only." (Kant, *Fundamental Principles*, 22).
- 21 Cf. Yeomans, *Expansion*, 22.
- 22 Cf. "[t]he object of respect is the law only, and that the law which we impose on ourselves and yet recognise as necessary in itself." (Kant, *Fundamental Principles*, 8).
- 23 Cf. "[a]s a law, we are subjected to it without consulting self-love; as imposed by us on ourselves, it is a result of our will. (Kant, *Fundamental Principles*, 8, 9)
- 24 Stern, *Understanding Moral Obligation*, 7ff.
- 25 Cf. "In every philosophy of reflection, like Kant's . . . freedom is nothing else but this formal self-activity." (Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox, rev. ed. and intro. Stephen Houlgate. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) §15 remark, 38) and "However essential it is to give prominence to the pure unconditioned self-determination of the will as the root of duty, and to the way in which knowledge of the will, thanks to Kant's philosophy, has won its firm foundation and starting-point for the first time through the thought of its infinite autonomy, still to adhere to the merely moral position, without making the transition to the concept of ethical life, is to reduce this gain to an *empty formalism*, and the science of morals to the preaching of duty for duty's sake." (Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §135 remark, 130, 131)
- 26 While Kant located obligation within reason itself and thus moved it away from reason-external entities like divine will (cf. Stern, *Understanding Moral Obligation*, 7ff), Hegel thinks this reason-internal obligation is tragic because of the prioritized difference between universal and individual.
- 27 Cf. "[f]rom this point of view [of the strict separation of individual and universal], no immanent doctrine of duties is possible; of course, material may be brought in from outside and particular duties may be arrived at accordingly, but if the definition of duty is taken to be the absence of contradiction, formal correspondence with itself—which is nothing but the establishment of abstract indeterminacy—then no transition is possible to the specification of particular duties nor, if some such particular content for acting comes under consideration, is there any criterion in that principle for deciding whether it is or is not a duty. On the contrary, by this means any wrong or immoral mode of conduct may be justified." (Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §135 remark, 130, 131)
- 28 Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 129.

- 29 Cf. "[t]he categorical imperative would be that which represented an action as necessary of itself without reference to another end, i.e., as objectively necessary." (Kant, *Fundamental Principles*, 14).
- 30 Cf. "the categorical imperative, by contrast, is not limited by any condition." (Kant, *Groundwork*, 33).
- 31 Kant, *Groundwork*, 18.
- 32 Cf. "[a]ll that is left to duty, therefore—insofar as in moral self-consciousness it is the essence or the universality of that consciousness, the way in which it is inwardly related to itself alone—is abstract universality, and for its determinate character it has *identity without content*, or the abstractly positive, the indeterminate." (Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §135, 130).
- 33 Cf. "[n]ow all imperatives command either hypothetically or categorically. The former represent the practical necessity of a possible action as means to something else that is willed (or at least which one might possibly will)." (Kant, *Fundamental Principles*, 14).
- 34 This parallels the immorality of theft insofar as theft implies a disrespect for the rational individual's status as property owner who exercises autonomy by freely using his or her property. The robbed individual becomes but a means for the thief.
- 35 Cf. "[t]he absence of property contains in itself just as little contradiction as the non-existence of this or that people, family, etc., or the death of the whole human race. But if it is already established on other grounds and presupposed that property and human life are to exist and be respected, then indeed it is a contradiction to commit theft or murder; a contradiction must be a contradiction of something, i.e. of some content presupposed from the start as a fixed principle. It is to a principle of that kind alone, therefore, that an action can be related either by correspondence or contradiction. But if duty is to be willed simply for duty's sake and not for the sake of some content, it is only a *formal identity* whose nature it is to exclude all content and determination." (Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §135 remark, 131).
- 36 Cf. Yitzhak Y. Melamed, *Spinoza's Metaphysics*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), xv.
- 37 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1929), B130ff, 245ff.
- 38 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B132, 246.
- 39 "The supreme principle of all intuition in relation to the understanding is that all the manifold of intuition stand under conditions of the original synthetic unity of apperception, all the manifold representations of intuition stand under the first insofar as they are given to us, and the second insofar as they must be capable of being combined in one consciousness for without that nothing could be thought or cognized through them, since the given representations would not have in common the *act* of apperception, I and thereby—would not grasped together in a self-consciousness." (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B137, 249).
- 40 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A249, 347.
- 41 Ibid., A109, 233.
- 42 Ibid., B275, 326.
- 43 Cf. Kant, *Pure Reason*, (B275), 326ff.
- 44 Cf. "[t]he first pure cognition of the understanding, therefore, on the whole of the rest of its use is grounded, and is at the same time also entirely independent from all conditions of sensible is the principle of the original synthetic unity of apperception." Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, eds. and trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. (Cambridge:



Cambridge University Press, 1998), 249, (B138), and “[t]he synthetic unity of consciousness is therefore an objective condition all cognition, not merely something I myself need in order to cognize an object but rather something under which every intuition must stand in order to become an object for me, since in any other way, and this synthesis, the manifold could not be united in one consciousness.” (Kant, *Pure Reason*, (B138), 249).

- 45 Cf. “[t]he principle of identity . . . accordingly reads: ‘Everything is identical with itself’, ‘A = A’; and negatively: ‘A cannot be A and not A at the same time’. This principle, instead of being a true law of thinking, is nothing but the law of the *abstract understanding*. The form of the sentence . . . already contradicts it itself since a sentence also promises a difference between subject and predicate, but this sentence does not accomplish what its form requires.” (Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, §115 remark, 178).
- 46 It is this priority of difference that is responsible for the notion of the “thing in itself.” Cf. “Kantian philosophy may be most determinately considered as having conceived the mind as consciousness, and as involving determinations only of phenomenology, not of philosophy of mind. It considers *I* as relation to something lying beyond, which in its abstract determination is called the thing-in-itself; and it conceives both the intelligence and the will solely according to this finitude.” Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, trans. by W. Wallace and A. V. Miller, rev. and intro. and comm. by Michael Inwood. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), §415 remark, 144.
- 47 While “identity” is often taken to be the “reflexive identity” of  $A = A$ , “unity” is supposed to express the notion that the identified differ and in their difference retain identity (e.g., in the way Hegel’s concept unites universal and particular in individuality).
- 48 See, for example, Paul Giladi, “Idealism and the Metaphysics of Individuality,” *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol 43, no. 2 (2015): 208–229.
- 49 Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, 214ff.
- 50 Ibid., §15 remark, 38. See also Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §5ff, 28ff.
- 51 Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §7, 31.
- 52 While there is a discussion about whether Kant’s individual is always free to choose—and thus in the case of being determined by drives or emotions—it seems to follow from Kant’s remarks about choice that he thinks that the individual can choose to follow the demands of reason or to be determined by the drives. Should there be no choice in the case of determination by the drives, the individual could not be held responsible for actions committed when being determined by the drives.
- 53 I owe this idea to Chris Yeomans.
- 54 Cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §13, 36.
- 55 Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 534.
- 56 Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §7, 31, 32.
- 57 Ibid., §7 addition, 33. Cf. also Stern, *Understanding Moral Obligation*, 170.
- 58 Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. David Ross, trans., Lesley Brown, rev. and intro. and notes. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 14.
- 59 Hegel preempts the criticism that this speculative notion cannot be understood (in the technical sense of “understanding”): “But [individuality as] the [unity of all three moments of the concept of the will], which is true and speculative (and everything true must be thought speculatively if it is to be comprehended) is the one into which the understanding declines to advance, for it is precisely the concept which it persists in calling the inconceivable.” (Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §7 remark, 32)

- 60 Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §6 remark 31.
- 61 Hegel, *Logic*, 513.
- 62 Ibid., 490.
- 63 Ibid., 529.
- 64 Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §4 remark, 28.
- 65 Hegel, *Logic*, 505.
- 66 Hegel, *Geschichte der Philosophie II*, 153.
- 67 Ibid.
- 68 Ibid., 154.
- 69 Ibid., 158.
- 70 Ibid.
- 71 Ibid.
- 72 Ibid.
- 73 Ibid.
- 74 Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 492.
- 75 Hegel, *Geschichte der Philosophie II*, 200.
- 76 Aristotle, *On the Soul*, 55.
- 77 "The soul is substance." (Hegel, *Geschichte der Philosophie II*, 201).
- 78 "Let it be assumed that the states by virtue of which the soul possesses truth by way of affirmation or denial are five in number, i.e. art, scientific knowledge, practical wisdom, philosophic wisdom, intuitive reason." (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 104).
- 79 Cf. "[s]ubstance, as this identity of the reflective shining, is the totality of the whole and embraces accidentality in itself, and accidentality is the whole substance itself." (Hegel, *Logic*, 491).
- 80 Hegel, *Geschichte der Philosophie II*, 153. See also Hegel, *Geschichte der Philosophie II*, 154.
- 81 So while Hegel appreciates much of Aristotle's analysis of practical rationality, he thinks Aristotle's metaphysics undermine his claims about will, freedom, responsibility and so on. (Cf. Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Naturalism: Mind, Nature, and the Final Ends of Life*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2012), 17.
- 82 Cf. "[t]herefore virtue also is in our power, and so too vice." (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W. D. Ross. (Kitchener: Batoche Books, 1999), 40. Cf. Stern, *Understanding Moral Obligation*, 151.
- 83 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 40ff.
- 84 Cf. "[f]irst, an action is 'voluntary' when the 'moving principle' is within the agent; second, when the agent himself is the origin of the action, or, as Aristotle also puts it, when it is in accord with the agent's impulses; and, third, when the action is not the result of an 'external force.' Hegel restates the Aristotelian view in his own terms so that it comes out saying that the 'inner, moving principle' becomes actualized, that is, when the 'inner' formation of an intention, made in light of a responsiveness to reasons, is actualized in an 'outward' action in conformity with the intention." (Pinkard, *Hegel's Naturalism*, 18) All these descriptions are compatible with the individuality-undermining notion of substance-metaphysics.
- 85 Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book III, 1, 4.
- 86 Cf. "substance . . . is the being in all being." (G. W. F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. DiGiovanni. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 490. And "[t]his movement of accidentality is the *actuality* of substance as the tranquil coming forth of itself. It is not active *against* something, but only against itself as a simple unresisting element." (Hegel, *Logic*, 490).
- 87 Stern, *Freedom, Norms, and Nature*.

- 88 Ibid., 99, 100.
- 89 Ibid., 99, 100. See also Pinkard, *Hegel's Naturalism*, 17ff.
- 90 Stern, *Freedom, Norms, and Nature*, 99, 100.
- 91 Ibid., 101.
- 92 Ibid., 103.
- 93 Ibid., 103.
- 94 Ibid., 102.
- 95 Ibid., 103. One could say that it is precisely this individual freedom that Aristotle cannot guarantee and that Kant and Hegel insist on. Without it, Hegel would be an Aristotelian.
- 96 Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §514, 228.
- 97 Ibid.
- 98 Ibid., §145, 154, 155.
- 99 Ibid., §514, 228.
- 100 Stern, *Self-legislation and Morality*, 245.
- 101 Stern, *Freedom, Norms, and Nature*, 91.
- 102 Kant, *Metaphysik der Sitten*, 336–503.
- 103 Ibid., 344.
- 104 Ibid., 345.
- 105 Ibid., 556.
- 106 Ibid., 560.
- 107 Ibid., 565.
- 108 Ibid., 568.
- 109 Ibid., 516–517.
- 110 Ibid., 591.
- 111 Ibid., 593.
- 112 Ibid., 600–607.
- 113 Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 214.
- 114 Ibid., 239.
- 115 Ibid., 243ff.
- 116 Ibid., 183.
- 117 Kant seems to think that Aristotle implies as much with passages such as this: “Now such a thing happiness, above all else, is held to be; for this we choose always for itself and never for the sake of something else, but honour, pleasure, reason, and every virtue we choose indeed for themselves (for if nothing resulted from them we should still choose each of them), but we choose them also for the sake of happiness, judging that through them we shall be happy. Happiness, on the other hand, no one chooses for the sake of these, nor, in general, for anything other than itself.” (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 10).
- 118 Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 183.
- 119 Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §148, 156ff.
- 120 Ibid., §152, 160.
- 121 Ibid., §20, 41 and Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 183.
- 122 Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §20, 41.
- 123 Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 183.
- 124 Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §513, 228.
- 125 Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 214ff.
- 126 Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §381, 14.
- 127 Just like Aristotle restricts his practical philosophy to the domain of beings that possess “rational souls” (Aristotle, *Ethics*, 19ff.), that is, human beings, so Kant’s claims about moral and sociopolitical normativity only apply to finite, rational beings, that is, humans and not angels or a god. (Kant, *Groundwork*, 30).

- 128 “Philosophieren ist dieser Idealismus, daß das Denken für sich ist, die Grundlage der Wahrheit ist.” (G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie I*. Werke 18. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986), 167. And “[t]he idealism of philosophy consists in nothing else than in the recognition that the finite is not truly an existent. Every philosophy is essentially idealism or at least has idealism for its principle, and the question then is only how far this principle is carried out.” (Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 124).
- 129 G. W. F. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic: Part I of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences*, trans., intro. and notes by T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting and H. S. Harris. (Cambridge: Hackett, 1991), §18, 42.
- 130 Cf. Sebastian Stein, “To Know and Not Know Right: Hegel on Empirical Cognition and Philosophical Knowledge,” in Thom Brooks and Sebastian Stein (eds.), *Hegel’s Practical Philosophy: On the Normative Significance of Method and System*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).
- 131 Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §577, 276.
- 132 “Kantian philosophy may be most determinately considered as having conceived the mind as consciousness, and as involving determinations only of phenomenology, not of philosophy of mind. It considers I as relation to something lying beyond, which in its abstract determination is called the thing-in-itself; and it conceives both the intelligence and the will solely according to this finitude.” (Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §415, 144).
- 133 Stern, *Freedom, Norms, and Nature*, 104.
- 134 Ibid.
- 135 Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §486, 218.
- 136 Ibid., §483, 217.
- 137 Cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §3, 19ff.
- 138 G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie I*. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986), 24. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie II*. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986), 153.
- 139 Immanuel Kant, *Die Metaphysik der Sitten*, ed. Weischedel. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1977), 319ff.
- 140 Stern, *Self-Legislation and Morality*, 247.
- 141 For example, Kant, *Metaphysik der Sitten*, 319, and Kant, *Groundwork*, 3ff.
- 142 Cf. “[b]ut if empiricism itself becomes dogmatic in regard to the ideas (as frequently happens), and boldly denies whatever lies beyond the sphere of its intuitive cognitions, then it itself makes the same mistake of immodesty.” (Kant, *Pure Reason*, [A474] B502).
- 143 Aristotle, *De Anima*, Mark Shiffman trans., intro. and notes, Newbury Port, MA: Focus, 2011.
- 144 Still, it is true that Kant makes his discussion of general metaphysical categories and some categories of nature dependent on the perspective of finite rationality in a way Aristotle and Hegel do not. However, Kant’s doing so does not undermine the case that his “critical metaphysics” aspire to the same unconditioned universality and objectivity as Aristotle’s and Hegel’s.
- 145 Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, 277. Aristotle, *Ethics*, 176.
- 146 G. W. F. Hegel, *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline Part I: Science of Logic*, eds. and trans. Klaus Brinkmann and Daniel O. Dahlstrom. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), §18, 46.
- 147 Stern, *Freedom, Norms, and Nature*, 104.
- 148 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. rev. intro. and com. W. D. Ross. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), lxxviii ff. Alternatively, one can define *nature* to include

- Aristotle's claims about god, spatiotemporal unconditioned metaphysical structures, non-material souls and so on; however, then nature seems to coincide with "substance" and have little to do with today's natural scientific naturalism.
- 149 G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature: Volume One*, ed. trans. intro. and expl. M. J. Petry. (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1970), 223, 229.
  - 150 G. W. F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (1830): *Zweiter Teil: Die Naturphilosophie (Mit den mündlichen Zusätzen)*. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986), §350 Zusatz, 430.
  - 151 Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*.
  - 152 Ibid., §577, 276. Calling essentially spiritual (*geistige*) beings such as humans "self-interpreting animals" (cf. Pinkard, *Hegel's Naturalism*, 18) seems to suggest that we are animals first and *geistige* second. However, since for *geistige* beings there are only *Geist* and nature sublated within *Geist*, we are "self-interpreters that have seemingly natural bodies, drives etc."
  - 153 Against this, for example, Pinkard, *Hegel's Naturalism*, 20ff.
  - 154 Where much of contemporary natural science would contradict Hegel's categorial analysis of nature and be unwilling to accept the existence of a non-material, life-enabling "simple soul" in organic nature.
  - 155 Cf. Alison Stone, "Hegel, Naturalism, and the Philosophy of Nature," *Hegel Bulletin*, vol. 34 (2013): 59–78.
  - 156 If the label "naturalism" is supposed to imply rejection of non-knowable and/or transcendental entities, "anti-transcendentalism" or "immanentism" might be less confusing labels.
  - 157 Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, §18, 42.
  - 158 Ibid., 299.
  - 159 Ibid., 282.
  - 160 Ibid., 276.
  - 161 Cf. Frederick Beiser, *Hegel*. (New York: Routledge, 2005).
  - 162 From the philosophical perspective, practical rationality, that is, objective spirit, is thus not an "achievement" (Pinkard, *Hegel's Naturalism*, 18) of finite agents but a categorial configuration of the unconditioned and true idea. Still, assuming "us" as finite, empirically situated individuals entails that we must actively render ourselves rational, that is, incessantly "achieve" the full rationality philosophy describes.

# 7 Against the Post-Kantian Interpretation of Hegel

## A Study in Proto-Marxist Metaphysics

*Michael Morris*

### 1. Introduction

In the last thirty years, Hegel scholarship has enjoyed a dramatic resurgence in Anglophone philosophical circles. This renewed prestige derives from some judicious cross-pollination with the ever-expanding universe of Kant literature and from the emergence of a highly seductive historical narrative, first proposed by Wilfred Sellars. In *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (1956), Sellars showed mid-twentieth-century analytic philosophers how to appreciate and linguistically appropriate the German Idealist critique of empiricism. In Richard Rorty's striking words, the books served "to usher analytic philosophy out of its Humean and into its Kantian stage." It thereby blazed a path for later philosophers, such as Robert Brandom, who, again in Rorty's words, made "an attempt to usher philosophy from its Kantian to its Hegelian stage."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, in recent years, both Brandom and John McDowell have drawn on core Sellarsian insights to show how something broadly akin to Hegel's completion of Kant's anti-empiricist project can provide us with significant resources for addressing current debates in analytic philosophy, for developing distinctive and timely accounts of perception, reference, semantics, practical reason and the relation between mind and world. Working from the historical end of this discussion, scholars such as Robert Pippin and Terry Pinkard have broadly deployed Sellarsian insights and extensive familiarity with contemporary debates in analytic philosophy to develop sophisticated, readable and highly relevant reconstructions of Hegel's project.

This convergence of contemporary debate and historical scholarship has produced a distinctly post-Kantian and anti-metaphysical interpretation of Hegel. In designating this interpretive school, the adjective "post-Kantian" does not merely characterize Hegel's temporal relation to Kant: It tacitly champions Kant's Copernican Revolution as the definitive turning point in the history of modern philosophy. It suggests that Hegel duly appreciated this epochal moment and that he developed his own philosophical project through a sustained and guiding encounter with

the texts of this definitive predecessor. According to this interpretation, Hegel embraces the Copernican Revolution, with its emphasis on the active, spontaneous and self-determining role of thought in the constitution of experience, and he accepts the limits that this insight places on traditional metaphysical and ontological inquiries. In fact, Hegel purportedly surpasses Kant in his consistent development of this revolutionary insight. While Kant locates the object in itself and the traditional entities of transcendent metaphysics beyond the epistemic limits revealed by the critical philosophy, Hegel's absolute idealism further reins in the semantic limits of thought until they coincide with their epistemic counterparts. Claims about mind-independent reality, the immaterial soul and the transcendent ground of being are not only rationally undecidable and inherently unjustifiable; they are also confused, even nonsensical. Among other things, this semantic strategy allows Hegel to defeat the radical skeptic by undermining the semantic legitimacy of her basic questions and concerns. Like the claims of metaphysics, her worries about the relation of thought to a mind-independent world are meaningless.

While acknowledging the allure of this interpretative project, I argue here that the core Sellarsian insight behind this line of interpretation necessarily renders it textually implausible and philosophically misguided. I further propose that we discard this now-dominant post-Kantian framework and instead approach Hegel in proto-Marxist terms. In articulating this alternative framework, I take Georg Lukács as my guide and Frederick Beiser as my ally. This alliance suggests a potent irony, for the proto-Marxist Hegel is a thoroughly metaphysical thinker, one who draws heavily upon the Spinozist, Platonist, Aristotelian, aesthetic and (vitalist) biological themes that he received from a range of non-Kantian sources, from the works of Jacobi, Herder, Goethe, Schiller, Hölderlin, Novalis, Schlegel and Schelling.<sup>2</sup> In my defense of the proto-Marxist interpretive framework, I therefore draw heavily on Beiser's insights in *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism*. Even more than Beiser, I believe that the intellectual influences of Hegel's non-Kantian predecessors dramatically outweigh and generally counteract the purported insights of Kant's Copernican Revolution. Following Beiser, I accept an interpretation of late (i.e., post-Fichtean) German Idealism as "the progressive de-subjectification of the Kantian legacy."<sup>3</sup> In drawing on these metaphysical resources, I defend Georg Lukács's groundbreaking and still insufficiently appreciated proto-Marxist interpretation of Hegel. With Lukács I argue (1) that Hegel's "return to Spinoza presents an attempt to relegate Kant's epistemology to a mere episode in the history of thought,"<sup>4</sup> (2) that "the most promising and still relevant dimensions of Hegel's philosophy are those that influenced the emergence and development of Marxism"<sup>5</sup> and (3) that only the recovery of the "pre-Kantian" dimensions of Hegel's philosophy allows us to discern the significant ways that it both anticipates and undergirds many still relevant features of Marxism.



I here emphasize four crucial differences that serve to distinguish the proto-Marxist interpretation from the standard post-Kantian framework. The first and foundational difference involves the existence of final causality or internal purposiveness in nature. As I argue in section 2, the now-standard post-Kantian interpretation of Hegel presupposes Sellars's core distinction between the realm of "empirical description" and the "space of reasons," a distinction that necessarily presupposes the absence of final causality in nature. By contrast, as articulated in section 3, the proto-Marxist framework approaches Hegel as the first modern philosopher to overcome the strained but stubbornly persistent fantasy of pure mechanism and to recognize the ineliminable role of Aristotelian final causes in even the most basic domains of nature. Second, this reintroduction of final causality into nature obviates the rigid Kantian distinction between the descriptive and the normative, the very distinction that grounds Sellars demarcation and defense of the space of reason as the unique locus of normativity.<sup>6</sup> According to the standard Aristotelian picture revived by Hegel, we can only comprehend what a thing is by considering what it ought to be, and we can only determine what a thing ought to be by considering what it is. This demands an inherently synthetic account of nature and normativity, ontology and ethics, psychology and epistemology, political science and political theory and so on.<sup>7</sup>

The third difference involves the nature of Hegel's dialectic. As I document in section 3, the post-Kantian interpretations developed by Pipin and Pinkard construe Hegel's dialectic as a creative response to the failure of Kant's metaphysical and transcendental deduction of the categories. The dialectic thus provides a rational reconstruction of the internally self-determined and progressive development of the basic norms that structure the possibility of empirical knowledge and rational agency. In other words, the dialectic presents the rational history of the space of reasons, and it thereby provides a justification for our current, non-empirical norms. In section 4, I contrast this position with Hegel's frequently repeated and philosophically insightful emphasis upon dialectic as a basic ontological category. I show how this ontological conception of the dialectic derives from Hegel's radicalization of Aristotle's conception of final causality and from his emphasis upon action or process as ontologically prior to entity.

Fourth, these competing frameworks provide divergent accounts of the constitution of the object. The post-Kantian interpretation accepts the Copernican Revolution and thus derives the structures of the object of experience from the rule-guided cognitive activities that make it possible. The proto-Marxist framework rejects the Copernican Revolution and adopts a traditional realist stance vis-à-vis the strictly natural objects of experience.<sup>8</sup> It simultaneously places a profound epistemic and practical significance upon the historical emergence of social objects constituted by human labor. In the work process, construed in very broad terms, human

beings impose a social form upon a natural substratum, thereby constituting a new and increasingly predominant domain of objects.

Moreover, the proto-Marxist interpretation characterizes the material constitution of the object as the locus of a dialectical interaction between subjectivity and objectivity, mind and world. Here I seek to articulate and at least partially defend Marx's interpretation of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*:

The greatness of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, its final result, is the dialectic, the recognition of negativity as the dynamic and productive principle. Hegel grasps the self-production of humanity as a process, the production of the object as self-objectification, both as a form of externalization and as the sublation of this externalization. Hegel thus expresses the essence of work and of objectified, actual, and therefore true humanity as the result of its own work.<sup>9</sup>

Marx correctly recognizes that the dialectic is first and foremost a very distinctive kind of interchange between thought and the material object. In our practical transformation of the material world, both thought and its object emerge from a single process. Conscious thought emerges from a reflection upon the practical and purposive activities that inscribe social forms upon initially natural objects. After sketching this dialectical account of labor and explaining its intimate links with Hegel's Aristotelian commitments, I briefly suggest that this conception of thought allows us to overcome the fragility, impotence and sterility that characterize the space of reasons or the normative domain of discourse, at least whenever they become rigidly demarcated from the domain of empirical description.

## **2. The Core Sellarsian Insight: Finding a Space for Reason**

The now dominant strand of post-Kantian Hegel interpretation derives from a core Sellarsian insight that comes in paragraph 36 of *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*:

The essential point is that in characterizing an episode or a state as that of knowing, we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or state; we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says.<sup>10</sup>

Suppose I know that the apple is green. What is this knowing? And how does this knowing relate to the greenness of the apple before me? According to one standard view, this knowing is a mental event (or state) that stands in complex causal relations with other events occurring

both within and beyond my mind. We might thus construe the mind as a collection of states or events, including desires, memories, sensations, beliefs, fears, and wonderings, all of which exist in various relations of causal and associative interaction. Assuming this conception of the mind, we might say that I know the apple is green if (a) I have some belief that the apple is green, (b) this belief causally derives from some green and applelike sensations in my mind and (c) these impressions are the effects in a causal chain that connects them with the green apple in front of me.

Of course, if we accept this view, then my knowledge that the apple is green does not substantially differ from a thermometer's "knowledge" that the room is currently 76 degrees, particularly if we construe beliefs as dispositions to display certain kinds of external behavior, that is, to produce certain kinds of utterances or actions.<sup>11</sup> In this case, my disposition to say or affirm that the apple is green, when in the presence of a green apple, is akin to the tendency of the thermostat to display the number 76 whenever there is a certain degree of molecular motion in the room. This thermometer view of belief clearly undermines active self-determining nature of thought that is implied by the notion of epistemically responsibility. If we can be asked to defend our beliefs, then we must be at least potentially responsible for them. If we can be responsible for our beliefs, then they must not merely be things that happen to us. In particular, justified beliefs cannot simply be externally determined effects in a causal system. In McDowell's memorable words, the efficient causes of a belief might provide "exculpations" but not "justifications."<sup>12</sup> Thus, even if we do treat beliefs as distinctly or irreducibly mental states, this mentality does not obviously alter the problematic similarity between my mind and a thermostat: They both remain systems constituted by relations of efficient causality. More important, it seems evident that these efficient causal relations either preclude or at least fail to capture the justificatory relations that characterize knowledge.

In the language inaugurated by Sellars, justification occurs within the space of reasons. It involves the normative relations of conceptual entailment, not merely the necessary, associative or probabilistic relations of causality. It involves norms or rules, not scientific laws. Justification concerns the ways we ought to think, even when we fail to do so. By contrast, efficient causality merely describes relations that do, in fact, hold without raising any claims of normative propriety. For Sellars and his followers, the normative relations of justification find their exclusive locus in the conceptual or rule-governed activities of linguistic practice. Thus, the disposition to affirm the greenness of the apple, when in the presence of a green apple, does not yet or in itself demonstrate knowledge that the apple is green. This knowledge also involves the, at least, tacit and always potentially reflective recognition of the more general rule that, under standard conditions, the presence of certain kinds of sensations are reliable indicators of a green apple.<sup>13</sup> Thus, impressions or sensations

are not sufficient for knowledge. Nor do they cause knowledge. It is only when we bring certain principles or rules of inference to bear upon these impressions that we first obtain potentially justified knowledge claims.

Sellars's basic contrast between causal and justificatory relations serves to undermine traditional empiricism, and it points toward a fundamentally linguistic conception of the mind. Sellars rejects those traditional forms of empiricism that presuppose

a structure of particular matter of fact such that (a) each fact can not only be noninferentially known to be the case, but presupposes no other knowledge either of particular matter of fact, or of general truths; and (b) such that the noninferential knowledge of facts belonging to this structure constitutes the ultimate court of appeals for all factual claims.<sup>14</sup>

Traditional empiricism posits a stratum of merely given or preconceptual facts, and it treats this stratum as the ultimate ground of justification. Against this view, Sellars argues that only knowledge claims can justify knowledge claims and that even knowledge of basic particulars already presupposes and draws on our recognition of the more general rules or concepts that govern correct reasoning. When it comes to the nature of mind and its place in the world, Sellars's insight further suggests a conception of thought or mind that provides an attractive alternative to crude or reductive forms of naturalism, on one hand, and to every form of ontological dualism, on the other. The causal relations and general laws of the empirical sciences do not suffice to characterize or capture the functions of the human mind, but this does not mean that the mind constitutes a non-natural intrusion or rupture in the realm of the natural. We are purely natural beings, but we have at some point learned to engage in activities (a) that are distinctly linguistic, conceptual and normative and (b) that therefore cannot be properly characterized in causal terms.

### **3. The Core Hegelian Insight: Rediscovering Teleology and Normativity in Nature**

Sellars's distinction between "empirical description" and "the space of reasons" presupposes the exhaustive ubiquity of efficient causal relations in both the natural world and the nonlinguistic dimensions of social reality. Sellars and his followers rightly argue that the normative status and active self-determination of thought can never be reductively explained in terms of the externally determined and merely descriptive relations of efficient causality. Efficient causality connects one state or event with another one external to it. The category of efficient causality can therefore never capture true self-determination. Insofar as we attempt to explain the self-determination of a thing or agent in terms of efficient causality,

we either treat it as a collection of entities or sub-things that themselves stand in merely external relations of efficient causality, or else we remove it from the empirical domain, treating it as some unified agency or source stands behind the empirical manifold of the thing. Hegel's critique of empirical psychology rightly warns against this tendency to reduce thought to externally determined relations of efficient causality. Hegel chastises empirical psychology for "transforming the mind into a mere aggregate of self-subsistent forces, which all stand in relations of reciprocal causality and therefore in merely external relations."<sup>15</sup> With Sellars, Hegel thus agrees that the efficient causal relations of at least a certain kind of "empirical description" can never fully or rightly capture human thought. Pace Sellars, he extends this potential for self-determination well beyond the linguistically constituted space of reasons:

For still we must recognize, first and foremost, that it is illegitimate to apply the categories of causal relations to physical-organic and mental life . . . It is thus illegitimate to say that food is the cause of blood or this particular dish, cold, or wetness is the cause of a fever or other ailment. It is likewise illegitimate to describe the Ionic climate as the cause of Homer's works or Caesar's ambition as the cause of the demise of the republican constitution of Rome . . . In a still much higher sense than life in general, it is the character of mind not to take up some other original entity within itself, and not to allow some cause to continue working within it, but rather to break up the external and transform it.<sup>16</sup>

On Hegel's view, organisms, institutions and human minds all have some irreducible and genuine capacity for self-organization or self-determination, a capacity that transcends and frequently overrides the category of efficient causality. Just as the knowing mind stands in active relation to the empirical materials it takes up and conceptualizes, so all living organisms and human institutions actively take up and transform the materials that form them.

With this expansion, Hegel rejects the fundamental distinction that grounds Sellars's core insight: the categorial disjunction between empirical description and the space of reasons. Instead of insulating the space of reasons from the broad and categorially monolithic domain of empirical description, Hegel seeks to rehabilitate the empirical legitimacy of the traditional Aristotelian category of final causality, construed as an irreducibly future-oriented process of self-organization. Hegel thus respectively traces his account of nature and mind back to the *Physics* and *De Anima* of Aristotle. In the second volume of the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel defends his Naturphilosophie against what he—perhaps unfairly—characterizes and castigates as the empirically untethered and whimsical innovations of Schelling, and he turns back for guidance to an older

tradition of Naturphilosophie, one that already finds a developed expression in Aristotle:

[I]t [Naturphilosophie] is as old as the observation of nature itself, from which it cannot be separated; it is in fact older even than physics, since, for example, Aristotle's physics is far more a Naturphilosophie than a physics [in the modern sense].<sup>17</sup>

In turning back to Aristotle, Hegel particularly emphasizes the importance of final causality or purposiveness as the future-oriented and self-directed organization that constitutes the internal essence or nature of things:

Aristotle had already recognized this concept of purpose in nature, and he designates its efficacy as the nature of a thing; the true conception of teleology, which is the highest, consists in the recognition of nature as free in its distinctive mode of life.<sup>18</sup>

Here, "freedom" involves a self-determination that is distinct from the external determination of efficient causality. It is this capacity for freedom or self-determination that makes something a true thing, not simply a collection of externally related parts or states. Moreover, it is the particular form or end of this self-determination that constitutes the nature of the thing.

Similarly, in volume three of the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel again turns to Aristotle in his articulation of mental life. As an antidote to the disintegrative and atomistic approach of so-called empirical psychology, Hegel returns to Aristotle's *De Anima*, which represents "the most important or even only work on the mind that has any speculative interest." Hegel even presents the "essential aim" of his own book as the attempt "to reintroduce the concept [den Begriff] into our knowledge of mind and thereby to recover the meaning of those Aristotelian books."<sup>19</sup> With *Begriff*, a term variously translated as "concept" or "notion," we come to a central point of terminological contention between the metaphysical and anti-metaphysical interpretations of Hegel. According to the interpretations developed by Pippin and Brandom, Hegel's use of *Begriff* roughly tracks with Kant's use of the term *category*.<sup>20</sup> On this interpretation, Hegel employs *Begriffe* or concepts to designate the general rules or categories that make empirical cognition possible. They differ from Kantian categories principally in their historical variation and their dialectical justification. By contrast, Beiser defends a linguistically idiosyncratic interpretation of *Begriff*, suggesting that Hegel uses the term in a somewhat peculiar sense to designate "the inherent form of an object, its inner purpose."<sup>21</sup> The previously quoted passage clearly supports the metaphysical interpretation advocated by Beiser. As we have seen, Hegel

seeks to recover the insights of Aristotle's *De Anima* by reintroducing the *Begriff* into our account of the mind. If we read *Begriff* as "category" or "non-empirical concept," this claim makes little sense. By contrast, it makes good sense if we take *Begriff* to designate the objective purpose or telos of a thing.

Hegel's return to Aristotle derives from his insightful and still relevant recognition of the profound limits of mechanism. In its pure form, mechanism represents the attempt to explain all objects in terms of qualitatively undifferentiated matter structured in terms of nothing but geometrical shape. In a tidy universe governed exclusively by geometry and simple mechanics, matter comes in only one type, and all objects differ only in their literal shape and perhaps, if we allow the void, in the amount of empty space they contain. In this universe, nothing moves itself. There is no self-determination or principle of self-movement. Things only move because they are moved. Here plenum theorists—those who deny the void and populate all apparently empty and still space with subtle fluid motions—are the true purists, since they insist that things only move when they are currently being moved by something else. By contrast, an atomist such as Lucretius accepts the void, and he must therefore build certain basic tendencies or strivings into his atoms, though he goes out of his way to render them as pointless and thus unpurposive as possible. In an endless space without any obvious intrinsic differentiation, Lucretius insists that all atoms endlessly "fall." They aren't pushed. They aren't pulled. Unlike Aristotle's stone, they aren't seeking their proper place. They simply all move together in a direction that can only be defined by their common motion. The other tendency of the Lucretian atom is equally incoherent or pointless, though nonetheless required to explain observed phenomena. According to Lucretius, the atoms sometimes randomly swerve.

Turning away from the empirically falsified visions of the Cartesian plenum and the Lucretian atom, we come to Newtonian physics, with its inertia and its suggestion of gravity as a genuine action at a distance. Inertia posits a genuine striving in matter, even if that striving is construed as a tendency toward a very particular kind of inertness. Unless actively interfered with, objects in motion maintain themselves in that same motion, while objects at rest maintain themselves in a position at rest. Gravity is a more obvious case of the irreducible nature of force or purposive striving. Of course, persistent mechanistic metaphors and the excessively mentalistic connotations of purpose prevent us from recognizing the basic ontological structure of gravity. Hegel sees these implications plainly, and he uses them to reinsert the Aristotelian conception of form as final cause, even in the most basic and least organic dimensions of the universe.

Hegel and his generation accepted Newtonian gravity as a genuine action at a distance. Gravitational force thus cannot be reduced to some



secret pushing, to the hidden motions of a plenum. Gravity therefore introduces a genuine though very limited form of self-determination into the universe. This self-determination becomes obscured when we think of gravity as a pulling, not as a striving or seeking. In the gravitational interaction, we tend to think of the smaller body as being pulled toward the larger one, while also admitting that the larger body is being pulled, ever so slightly, by the smaller one. By contrast, Hegel employs language that more accurately reveals the ontological nature of gravity. He describes gravity as a simultaneously relational and self-directed form of striving. Of themselves, bodies strive toward a future state, and it is only this intended future state, the center of gravity toward which they strive, that allows us to characterize and predict their current motion. Speaking of the single point that is the center of gravity for some given system of interacting bodies, Hegel says, "The unity of gravity is only an ought, a longing, an unhappy striving, to which matter is eternally damned . . . If material could accomplish the end that gravity seeks, then it would disappear into a single point."<sup>22</sup> In this characterization of gravity, Hegel employs overtly normative and mentalistic language. I take this language as an intentional provocation, as an attempt to undermine our historically acquired and un-Aristotelian habit of drawing rigid ontological and/or categorial distinctions between the natural world and the realm of conscious thought, between matter and mind.

In its most general or basic sense, all matter is organized by gravity. Here gravity and matter are not two distinct things that happen to come together. The filling of space and the gravitational tendency of attraction are not two separate things that just happen to be conjoined. Matter is not an inert thing that just happens to have a distinct capacity to attract or seek other matter. Instead, Hegel conceives of matter as inherently constituted by forces or related strivings that stand in relations of form and matter. Given its tendency toward plurality and disintegration, we might describe the repulsive force by which matter fills space as the material component of matter while describing the various strivings or forces of attraction as the form(s) of the matter. Here, as with Aristotle, the matter/form relation is always also a relation of relative plurality to relative unity. The form shapes or organizes and thus unifies a more or less diverse material manifold in relation to some aim.

As an explanation of tendency, the laws of gravity are universal. However, this does not mean that the laws of gravitational striving suffice to explain everything that happens to matter in the world. Inertia partially thwarts gravity and keeps the planets in orbit. The molecular bonds in the stem keep the apple from falling. The electrical activity in my arm causes my muscles to contract and my arm to raise. In each case, the natural striving of gravity is overcome by alternative strivings. This suggests a non-reductive and hierarchical vision of objects and forces. The apple and my arm are composed of general matter as it is constituted by

and determines itself to act in accordance with gravity. However, gravity does not suffice to explain all the activities of the apple or my arm because these things are controlled by higher level ends that employ, synthesize and restructure the more basic aim of general matter. We see the complexity of this picture if we consider my arm more closely. My arm is composed of bones, muscles, ligaments, skin, blood vessels, nerves and so on. In turn, these are composed of many different kinds of cells, which themselves are composed of an astounding array of complex organic molecules, which are themselves composed of elements, and so on. However, complex organic molecules are not merely collections of elements. Nor are cells merely collections of molecules. At each increasing level of complexity, we see a fragile, partially dependent, but still self-organizing process that organizes lower level materials in accordance with its own end. Moreover, these ends are never governed by necessary laws since they can both be thwarted by lower-level tendencies and appropriated by higher level ends. What goes on in a cell, for instance, is a complex relation among (a) the natural tendencies of complex organic molecules, (b) the intrinsic self-regulating aims of the cell and (c) the higher aims of the body.

As we have seen, Hegel describes gravity in normative and traditionally mentalistic terms, as both an “ought” and an “unhappy striving.” This normative language is important, for it suggests the ultimate dependence of moral or normative rules on ends embodied in the objective world. We might break this point down into three related claims. First, there is the anti-Kantian claim that the good is always more basic or fundamental than the abstract rules we derive from it. Second, there is the anti-Platonist claim that the good is inextricably embodied in the material world. Third, we have the neo-Aristotelian claim that the objective embodiment of the human good does not presuppose some absolute or categorical disjunction between humans and other natural objects.<sup>23</sup> All things are constituted by their striving toward some end, the attainment of which is their good. There are obvious differences between stones, trees, dogs and humans. Stones pursue their good without sentient pleasure or awareness. Dogs pursue their good without self-doubt, without much creative input into their particularized instantiation of the general goodness of the dog and without any sense or question of the relation of their good to the world as a whole. Still, the reflection, self-doubt, creativity and world awareness of the human pursuit of the good represent variations on a common structure of end-oriented striving, not some radical departure from the natural world.

Hegel’s corpus is filled with considerations of objective teleology and the normative constitution of the thing. A particularly clear and succinct example can be found in his discussion of what he somewhat idiosyncratically calls “apodictic judgments.” In his attempt to move beyond the formal tautologies of traditional analytic judgments (the bachelor is

unmarried) and the singular conjunction of empirical particulars (this car is red), Hegel turns to relations of internal purposiveness, where subject and predicate are non-contingently but non-analytically connected. Here we see the kind of necessity that holds between some particular constitution of heart chamber valves and the well-functioning heart, where the latter is construed as the self-organization of numerous form-matter composites.<sup>24</sup> The heart consists of various tissues, muscles, cells and so on. These all have various self-organizing tendencies that must be more or less rightly regulated and directed toward the ultimate end of the heart, at least insofar as the heart is and remains a heart. The relation between the heart and certain conditions of the chamber valves is neither analytic nor contingent: It is rationally determined or necessitated in a very particular kind of way. Hegel identifies this connection with apodictic judgments, presumably because he sees mere analytic judgments, which would traditionally be called apodictic, as relatively useless and often arbitrarily stipulative.

Hegel's apodictic judgments involve claims such as "the house (constructed in such and such a way) is good" and "the action (carried out in this manner) is right."<sup>25</sup> In these judgments, the subject identifies the particular (house, action, heart, etc.) as belonging to a normatively constituted type or genus. There are ways that houses, actions and hearts ought to be, and to describe something as a house, an action or a heart is already to see it in relation to some ideal end. Most important, Hegel insists that these judgments capture the true structure of genuine objects, which are themselves actually structured by these same ends. Hegel thus claims that the "subject" of the apodictic judgment expresses the "truth" of the thing as it

is broken into what it ought to be and what it is . . . this original division, which is the omnipotence of the concept (Begriff), which is just as much the return into its unity as it is the absolute relation of the ought and the is to one another—this division makes the real into a thing. This inner relationship, this concrete identity, constitutes the soul of the thing.<sup>26</sup>

The "concept," the internal essence of a thing, consists in the division between what the thing is and what it strives to become. A thing is a center or source of activity. Alternatively, we might simply say: to be is to act. A thing only acts when it determines itself. This self-determination involves the pursuit or maintenance of an end, where this end involves the dynamic organization of the thing as a system. This organization must inform both (a) the manifold and always potentially centrifugal tendencies of the matter that constitutes the organization and (b) the potential impacts upon the systems by an external environment. The essence and existence of a thing therefore consist in striving to achieve or maintain the ought, within what, from the standpoint of the system, merely is.

#### 4. From Kant to Hegel: The Dialectic as Post-Kantian Deduction

In the late 1980s, first with the publication “Kant on the Spontaneity of the Mind” (1987) and then with *Hegel’s Idealism* (1989), Robert Pippin began to forge a series of sophisticated connections between Sellars’s core insight and the historical development of post-Kantian German Idealism. In the former article, Pippin attempts to characterize a crucial stratum or dimension in Kant’s account of the mind, one that is distinct from (a) the empirical experience of inner sense, (b) the noumenal and thus unknowable subject and (c) the merely formal conditions of experience. Pippin argues that Kant identifies a type of genuine subjectivity that “cannot be exclusively phenomenal,” although it does not therefore belong to the noumenal realm of the thing in itself.<sup>27</sup> Kant characterizes this stratum of subjectivity or mind in terms of the apperceptive nature of thought and its inherent “spontaneity.”

The spontaneous and apperceptive nature of judgment clearly differentiates this inherently cognitive and intentional mental process from the empirical data of mere inner sense. We can, of course, construe our mind as a temporally ordered collection of “thoughts, perceptions, memories, wishes, dreams, etc.” We may even be able to formulate causal laws that explain the relations that hold between these states. Such states and laws reveal the mind or subject as it is given in “inner sense,” in the domain of empirical but merely temporal experience that presupposes—and thus cannot account for—the spontaneity of thought that first constitutes our cognitive or intentional relation to objects. Describing the relationship between the passivity and the strictly empirical nature of inner sense, on one hand, and the spontaneity of thought, on the other, Pippin says that

there can indeed be a relation of existential dependence among mental states, such that a later (M2) could not be a mental state of a subject unless an earlier had occurred (M1), and psychology might eventually determine which kinds of such dependence there are. But on the spontaneity view, nothing about that relationship of dependence accounts for M2 being a representation of an object. The dependence of M2’s occurrence on other mental states is one thing; but M2’s being a representation of, say, *m* is quite another.<sup>28</sup>

As we have seen, Sellars highlights the incompatibility between the causal patterns that relate empirical objects and the rational relations that characterize the space of reasons, the domain where justification occurs. Pippin makes a similar point here, though he shifts the emphasis from justification to the related concept of intentionality. The intentional status of a mental state can be neither characterized in terms of nor derived from

its causal history. In terms of its causal history, as an object of empirical experience, the mental state is merely passive. It is determined by prior states. It is not self-determining. By contrast, in intentional thought, we are self-determining. In other words, intentional thought involves the way that we actively take up and unify a manifold of states in accordance with concepts or rules.

Here we should further note how Pippin's acceptance of the distinction between the passive relations of "inner sense" and the spontaneous activity of judgment (about an object) leads him to draw a sharp distinction between psychology and epistemology. Psychology characterizes the empirical laws of inner sense. Epistemology or critical philosophy analyzes a distinct and non-psychological form of normative activity. While some might applaud this stalwart resistance of the so-called psychologistic fallacy, we should remember that psychologism only proves fallacious if we presuppose the possibility of a strictly mechanistic, descriptive, or causally efficient account of the empirical psyche. As I argue here and elsewhere, this presupposition is implausible, un-Hegelian, and unwelcome.<sup>29</sup> In particular, this presupposition naturally suggests and generally attends a similarly rigid demarcation between sociology and epistemology. Ultimately, the division at the heart of Pippin's Kant interpretation impoverishes epistemology and distorts the true object of psychology (and sociology).<sup>30</sup> By contrast, Hegel's Aristotelian position demands a deeply integrated account of epistemology and psychology.

After distinguishing between inner sense and the spontaneity of representation or judgment, Pippin insists that this spontaneity does not violate the strictures of Kant's transcendental idealism: It does not yield knowledge of the self-determining causal activity of the noumenal subject. In Pippin's interpretation, the spontaneity of thought does not involve any type of causality, and it does not presuppose the existence of any special kind of thing. Instead, the "spontaneity" of thought simply describes our capacity to follow rules, apply concepts and give reasons. This non-empirical and non-metaphysical conception of mind provides the key to Pippin's interpretation of Post-Kantian German Idealism. After connecting the core Sellarsian insight with central terms from Kant's transcendental deduction, he states,

I want at least to suggest that understanding the status of this claim [concerning the inherently spontaneous nature of thought] as a claim about 'subjectivity,' or what it is to be a subject, and not as a claim about a thinking being or substance, is a necessary introduction to understanding later idealist reflections on the subject, and to seeing them as following in this Kantian spirit, rather than as violating the noumenal restriction everywhere with talks of 'egos,' 'absolutes,' and 'spirits.'<sup>31</sup>

Pippin has since fleshed out this promissory note at great length, providing a post-Kantian and non-metaphysical interpretation of Hegel's idealism. Beginning in Hegel's *Idealism*, he presents Hegel's philosophy as the development of Kant's conception of the mind. He begins with a discussion of Kant, where he sketches the now familiar connection between Sellars's core insight and Kant's discussion of the spontaneous and apperceptive nature of thought:

Kant frequently characterizes human, discursive, apperceptive understanding as a "spontaneity," and in some passages seems even to tinker with the idea of drawing some metaphysical implications from this aspect of thought. But for our purposes, what this synonym means, given that Kant uses it to mean an uncaused or perhaps self-caused cause, is that there is a feature of discursive thought that cannot be described as empirically grounded (i.e. caused). That feature is the apperceptive quality of human thought. As suggested previously, although it is true that when I, for example, perceive X, I also take myself to be perceiving, or apperceive, the latter is not only not an isolatable experience, it cannot be described in any way as an inference I draw or as a causal result of my perceiving.<sup>32</sup>

"Discursive thought" does not belong to the empirical domains of inner sense, psychology, or neuroscience. It "cannot be described as empirically grounded" or "caused." More specifically, discursive thought involves non-causal relations. My knowledge of X presupposes that I know (or, rather, that I can always reflectively become aware) that I perceive X. This apperceptive awareness is not caused by my perception. My knowledge that I perceive X is not some mental state that exists alongside by perception of X. Moreover, Pippin asserts that this apperceptive state is not an inference that I draw from the existence of the perceptive state. Inferences hold between potential knowledge claims, and my perception of P is not itself a knowledge claim. It is an empirically existent state that stands in causal relations with other causal states. "Knowledge," Pippin therefore states, "is not a matter of inferences from noninferentially warranted states. There are no such states."<sup>33</sup>

Justification and reference occur within the space of reasons. They both presuppose our facility with various rules and forms of inference. As the necessary preconditions of reference and justification, these rules and inferences can neither be justified by nor derived from the basic contents of experience itself. This raises two obvious and pressing questions: "From whence come these rules?" and "What justifies their application?" In response to these questions, Kant respectively offers the metaphysical and the transcendental deductions of the categories. In the metaphysical deduction, he derives the categories, construed here as rules that govern the synthesis of the manifold provided in intuition, from the basic

logical structures of judgment. Then, in the transcendental deduction, he attempts to justify the use of these rules by demonstrating their applicability to every possible manifold given in intuition. These arguments purport to establish the innate, universal and unchanging status of the categories. By contrast, Pippin's Hegel treats the categories as socially constituted, practically informed, and historically variant. The categories derive from language and collective epistemic practice, not from the pre-social, nonlinguistic and strictly theoretical apparatus of the transcendental subject.

For Pippin, the space of reasons is a collectively constituted space. We enter this space through socialization in specific practices that involve us in asking for and giving reasons:

I could say that when S claims to know P, S must be implicitly understanding him- or herself to be participating in the practice of judgment and justification and that S must contextually or implicitly understanding enough of such a practice to count as participating in it.<sup>34</sup> Here the socially constituted nature of the rules that govern judgment and justification remain largely tacit, suggested only by the term *practice*. Elsewhere, Pippin explicitly develops and reflects on the social nature of epistemic norms:

We now assume, at least provisionally, that any claim-making activity can count as a possibly objective judgment only within the "practice" or "institution" governing such judging, and that there is such a practice only insofar as a community of participants take themselves to be participating in it . . . If this is so, we need some reconstructive way of understanding why any such participants would come to take such a practice as constraining possible judgments about objects . . . This deduction can serve as a deduction if we can show some rational inevitability, even necessity, in the development of the stages of such a progressive self-consciousness. So, the pursuit of knowledge will . . . be reconceived as participation in a social practice or institution, a rule-governed, collective, teleological activity . . . assessing the rationality of such practices will ultimately involve considering such self-consciously held criteria as, in effect, social norms, possible bases for what Hegel will call "mutual recognition."<sup>35</sup>

Justification and reference always presuppose certain norms and forms of inference. These norms and inferences themselves derive from communities that share common epistemic practices.

Of course, there are many different forms of communal epistemic practice. In order to avoid the looming threat of relativism, Hegel must demonstrate some inherent rationality in these shapes of spirit. He must show that failure to observe some set of communal norms involves a form of irrationality, not simply a case of nonconformity. Furthermore, he must



show that some forms of communal epistemic practice are more rationally coherent or satisfactory than others. He must therefore provide an ideal reconstruction of the historical progression of various communal epistemic practices, and he must show that this progression involves “some rational inevitability,” even some form of “necessity.” At this stage in the argument, Pippin finally introduces the notion of teleology. As Pippin interprets Hegel, neither nature nor even history has an inherently teleological structure. Instead, the purposive development of teleology only emerges in a very particular and idealized historical domain, that is, in the history of our empirically ungrounded and self-determining standards of theoretical and practical normativity.

Pippin treats Hegel’s dialectic as an alternative to Kant’s metaphysical and transcendental deductions, as an attempt to trace and justify the rational changes in the rules that govern the way we give and evaluate reasons. It thus remains within the space of reasons or the contours of epistemic and normative discourse. It attempts to determine inconsistencies within discourse or the space of reasons, and it purports to show how these inconsistencies find resolution in historically subsequent and more advanced sets of norms or rules. In testing norms, it does, of course, go beyond the mere explicit articulation of norms and the discovery of the overt contradictions between the norms so articulated. It can also test these norms against experience, but this experience itself is always only the developed conceptual application of the same norms. In other words, the dialectic can compare the general articulated norm with an experience of the world as itself already articulated by that norm. It cannot, however, compare the norm with the object as it exists prior to the conceptual application of the norm that first makes the object an object of experience. The object beyond or before the application of the concept remains a mere thing-in-itself, the most abstract and empty of concepts.

Presupposing the fundamental distinction between empirical description and the space of reasons, Pippin’s account of the dialectic drives a fundamental wedge between the empirical history of the historians and the dialectical reconstructions of the Hegelian philosopher. The former traces developments through diverse empirical domains—including technology, economics, warfare, medicine, religious practice, bureaucracy, the state, sexual customs, family life and so on—as these developments come together and shape the totality of social existence. By contrast, a dialectical account would only consider these diverse social domains from the standpoint of our normatively structured epistemic and moral practices of offering and evaluating reasons. We see this division clearly in Terry Pinkard’s *Hegel’s Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason* (1994). Although he does not explicitly draw on Sellars, Pinkard clearly moves within the basic argumentative framework established by Sellars and elaborated by Pippin. He argues that consciousness—he construes this in a broadly Kantian sense as any cognitive judgment or claim that is about

an object—always presupposes tacit standards or norms that determine what “counts as the way in which things ‘really are’ as opposed to the way they only seem to be.”<sup>36</sup> We only take “things to be such and such in terms of the kinds of reasons that we have come to take as authoritative for ourselves.”<sup>37</sup> In other words, reasons or epistemic standards always mediate our relation to objects in the world. Moreover, following Pip-pin’s Kant interpretation, Pinkard also suggests that the consciousness of an object always presupposes the possibility of self-consciousness, that is, of our ability to articulate, reflect on and defend the non-empirical rules that make empirical knowledge possible. In the following passage, he defines self-consciousness as a linguistic and social affair, though he here emphasizes the practical analogue of the epistemic practice of giving and evaluating reasons:

Self-consciousness on the Hegelian model is not the awareness of a set of internal objects (sensations, mental occurrences, representations, whatever). To use a metaphor, self-consciousness is at least minimally the assumption of a position in ‘social space.’ We locate ourselves in ‘social space’ when, for example, we reason in certain ways . . . when we recognize others as having the right to make certain kinds of moves within their speech-community; or when we give a reason to another person to explain or to justify what we are doing.<sup>38</sup>

Neither our epistemic nor our practical reasons can be directly grounded, without any further mediation, in some merely given domain beyond the social space of reasons. Without some prior rational assumptions, we cannot move directly from the descriptive realm of causality to the normative realm of justification. Therefore, our ultimate justification of our non-empirical epistemic and practical norms must come from within the space of reasons itself.

If we reject timeless Kantian-style deductions and the sufficiency of the categorical imperative, then only some dialectical movement within the space of reasons can defuse the threat of relativism. In Pinkard’s terms, “[d]ialectic looks at reason-giving activities that forms of life give of what they take to be authoritative for themselves, and how those accounts are transformed in terms of considerations *internal* to the accounts themselves” (emphasis added).<sup>39</sup> On this view, dialectic becomes a strictly philosophical and rather anemic affair, one that diverges from the rich empirical details of history itself:

A dialectical history tells a different story from that of the history of historians in that it does not concern itself primarily with how things came about—what social forces were at work, what contingencies were brought into play—but with showing how succeeding

“social spaces” contained resources within themselves that were able to explain and justify themselves over and against earlier alternative accounts and to demonstrate and affirm for themselves that their own accounts of themselves were satisfactory. This dialectical history of self-consciousness is thus also a history of rationality itself.<sup>40</sup>

Pinkard’s dialectical history remains haunted by the increasingly awkward distinction between the empirical description of causes and the rational articulation of norms and justifications, between historical accounts of “how things came about” and philosophical accounts of how we justify them, between objective “social forces” and the subjective or self-conscious domain of rational reflection. By contrast, Hegel rejects such rigid distinctions, emphasizing the dialectical relation between the purportedly distinct domains of subjectivity and objectivity, normativity and description. The Hegelian dialectic does not remain within the distinctive space of reasons or the social-linguistic practices of reflection and justification. Instead, there are dialectical processes that unfold (a) in the material structure of the object, even prior to all human acts of human conceptualization; (b) in the distinctive domain of human thought and reflection; and (c) in the interaction between the subject and the object, as this interaction simultaneously involves practical processes of material formation and theoretical elements of self-reflection. The third dimension of the dialectic increasingly subsumes or integrates the first and second, particularly through the progression of history, which Hegel, anticipating Marx, construes as the social formation or organization of the natural world. As history develops, all natural objects increasingly come to embody the social forms directly imposed on them through human activity. Similarly, even abstract processes of relatively theoretical reflection become inextricably intertwined with and expressive of the practical aims embedded in collective social activity.<sup>41</sup> Marx adopts and develops this third dimension of the dialectic under his expansive and relatively technical conception of work or labor. Before considering this move, however, we must examine the strictly objective or material dimension of the dialectic.

## 5. From Aristotle to Hegel: The Dialectic as Ontological Category

Hegel’s conception of the dialectical development of the material object derives from his radicalization of Aristotelian teleology.<sup>42</sup> In particular, as we have seen, Hegel interprets the objective purpose that constitutes a thing in terms of a tension or motive contradiction between what is and what ought to be. “What is” designates both the incorrectly formed or potentially unruly material that makes up a thing and the external environmental factors that must constantly be navigated, avoided or

appropriated in the pursuit of the telos—that is, what ought to be. Hegel insists that we cannot grasp the telos or form in abstraction from the matter. The telos or form is the process of organizing the matter. However, we can only grasp the matter when we recognize that it is itself a form-matter composite, with independent strivings that, left unchecked, tend to subvert the higher form that organizes them. Thus, a proper conceptualization of an object always necessarily involves a process of playing out and thinking through oppositional developments or tendencies.<sup>43</sup>

A concrete example may help to illustrate this point. Hegel considers the state as a self-organizing process that incorporates and regulates legal rights, individual conscience, family life, market exchanges, and alternative branches of production. We cannot conceptualize the aim or form of the state until we carefully consider the material domains that it organizes, and we cannot properly consider these domains without treating them as partially independent processes of self-organization. In considering the state, we must not only consider its parts. We must consider the inherent, shifting and ineradicable tendencies of its parts to thwart or undermine the state, to become something other than what they are within the healthy state.

A thing, whether it be a state, a custom, a tree, or a molecule, is an end-oriented process, and this process can only exist and be conceived in relation to what is other to the end that defines it. As we have seen, the essential other to the object includes both the matter and the environment, where the former and at least sometimes the latter must themselves be construed as end-oriented processes. Hegel presents this essential other-relation as an inherent contradiction in the thing. The contradiction does not simply derive from the oppositional strivings within some thing, but rather, it emerges from the essential role that this opposition plays in the constitution of the thing. Hegel succinctly expresses the relation between purposive striving and the inherently dialectical, oppositional or essentially other-related structure of the object as follows:

It [contradiction] is the root of all movement and life. Only insofar as something contains a contradiction in itself does it move itself [i.e., determine itself], does it possess a drive or activity . . . We must concede the contradictions that the ancient dialecticians have discovered in motion. But from this it does not follow that there is no motion, but rather much more that motion is itself existent contradiction. For the inner and true self-movement, the drive in general (appetite or *nîsus* of the monad, the *entelechy* of the absolutely simple essence), consists in nothing but the fact that, in one and the same sense, something is in itself and also insufficient, the negative of itself.<sup>44</sup>

Although Hegel draws on Leibniz's appetitive conception of the monad and an Aristotelian conception of *entelechy*, he rejects the strict

self-containment of the former and what he perceives as the insufficiently dynamic nature of the later. In the *Physics*, when Aristotle characterizes change as the actualization of potential, he conceives change in terms of a relatively static conception of origin (matter with potential) and end (actualization), thereby ontologically and epistemically privileging stasis over change, entity over action. For Aristotle it is the self-contained stasis of potentiality and actuality that make the process of change comprehensible. By contrast, Hegel takes process or action as ontologically and epistemically basic, and he presents all static conceptions of potentiality and actuality as necessary but preliminary abstractions in the total process of speculative thought.

Action or motion is thus inherently contradictory because it exists as a basic or irreducible relation between inherently oppositional relata. On one hand, these relata can neither exist nor be grasped in isolation from this or some similarly oppositional relation. On the other hand, the relata are genuinely oppositional and can only be comprehended insofar as we consider them in their inherent difference or potential divergence. Finally, the foundational unity of the relation and the opposition of the relata can never be sharply disambiguated. Hegel expresses the impossibility of disambiguation, perhaps somewhat awkwardly, when he suggests that, "in one and the same sense," a thing is always "in itself" and "the negative of itself." There is surely some difference in sense between these dual dimensions of the thing, but this difference can never be fully differentiated: The dimensions differentiated only have their existence and their sense in the difference, from which they cannot be cleanly abstracted.

This means that we can never simply characterize or conceptualize the ideal state, economy, or family. The good is always materially embedded. It exists as the actual organizing form of some particular materials. As constantly ordered by the good, these materials themselves have divergent strivings that constitute their inherent material status vis-à-vis the organizing good. In turn, these divergent strivings can only be conceived in terms of the unruly matter they order and the larger environment that is always only partially successful in ordering them. We can never comprehend the economy or the family as self-enclosed domains with their own determinate and pristine aims. Instead, we only begin to grasp the inner logic of the economy or the family when we grasp how the current practices and tendencies of these domains emerge from and continue to intermediate (a) the ideal form, (b) the shifting material substratum and (c) the appropriative tendencies of the larger environment.

We can see this complex threefold relation and the extreme fragility of the abstracted space of reasons if we consider the history of twentieth-century Anglophone philosophy. If we construe the dialectic as a form of post-Kantian deduction, then we must strongly hope that the history of twentieth-century philosophy has developed as a series of progressively adequate responses to internal questions, suggestive proposals,

internal contradictions and persuasive arguments. Indeed, if we cannot reconstruct the history of academic philosophy in terms of some thread of internal rational development, then it seems still more implausible to suggest that broader trends in the norms that guide our political, legal, familial, sexual and economic lives should display this kind of internal, progressive and rational development. While rational argument and the unfolding pursuit of particular lines of an inquiry surely played some role in the development of twentieth-century Anglophone philosophy, it takes only brief reflection to recognize that academic philosophy is a series of practices that organize complexly and gradually shifting materials: undergraduates, graduate students, instructors and professors, each with his or her at least initially prior and always partially personal interests, questions, intuitions and ambitions. More important still, academic philosophy exists within the larger and shifting context of the modern research university, which itself exists within the context of a postindustrial, pluralistic, bureaucratic and market-oriented society.

At some point in the mid-twentieth century, philosophy departments taught undergraduates the standard works of the Western philosophical canon while the top research positions generally went to individuals working on very technical and specialized questions in the philosophy of language and science. Both trends have relatively evident and respective explanations in exogenously developed conceptions of liberal arts education and scientific expertise. In recent years, broad social, economic, and cultural trends have increasingly encouraged an educational emphasis upon vocational training, value-neutral skills and anticanonical skepticism. Discussions within philosophy journals and seminar rooms surely played some minimal part in this process, but the main forces at work surely came from beyond philosophy, often from beyond the academy. At the level of research, the exogenous shifts are subtler and more diffuse but nonetheless pervasive. The most significant changes in the research landscape derive from the shifting allocation of funds and interests between different research subgroups (i.e., biomedical ethics, Kant scholarship, modal logic, cognitive science, feminism, etc.), not first and foremost from the rational force of argument either within or between these subgroups.

The discursive space of reasons always remains the victim of exogenous forces, of causal impingements that illicitly motivate, complexly warp and ultimately determine the outcomes of narrow pockets of purportedly rational debate. If we accept a rigid distinction between efficient causes and rational relations, between “social forces” and “reason-giving activities,” then a grim picture emerges, one where power, caprice and subconscious motives relegate rational deliberation to the margins and ephemeral interstices of our social and personal lives.<sup>45</sup> However, as we have seen, Hegel rejects this rigid distinction. For Hegel, reason is in the world. This simply means that the natural and social world consists of

self-organizing processes that are at least partially self-determining and that operate in accordance with normative relations of propriety or rightful fit. For Hegel, there are no irreducibly brute causes, no strictly blind forces.

Of course, in relative terms, many forces are brute and blind. When the squirrel eats the acorn, this action merely impinges on and thwarts the self-organizing activity of the acorn. From the standpoint of the acorn, this squirrel's teeth represent a mere external force. However, the motion of the squirrel's teeth is not itself a brute force. It follows in accordance with the purposive self-organizing activity of the squirrel. We can make the same kind of distinctions in considering the development of academic philosophy. Certain shifts in student interests, administrative procedures and external funding regularly counteract our rational convictions and disrupt our well-laid plans. These changes come from without. They represent external impingements, not self-determined features of our rational activity. However, they are not mere brute causes. In themselves, they emerge from and partially conform to the purposive processes that govern political and familial budgeting, institutional organization and the broader lives of our students. The status of some development as brute cause or reason is not inherent to the development itself. The development itself is always dialectically complex, containing semi-latent or overt tensions between aim, matter and environment. Moreover, if a particular self-organizing process, such as philosophy, can take a particular development and integrate it within the development of its ends, then the exogenous cause acquires a rational status within the process. With regard to any particular thing or process, the relation between efficient causality and normative relationality is thus relative and always open to revision.

Recall Hegel's warning that we should treat neither "the Ionic climate as the cause of Homer's works" nor "Caesar's ambition as the cause of the demise of the republican constitution." Clearly, the Ionic climate, the mountains and the sea that so obviously shaped Greek culture, exists prior to and independently from Homer's works. Moreover, the climate clearly had a profound impact on Homer's works. Nonetheless, this external influence became a purposively organized feature within the finely crafted world of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. A good artist first receives her influences and material. They are initially external impingements or mere givens, until she re-forms them and inscribes them within the world of her work. Similarly, the ambitions of Caesar may well have existed independently of the political crisis he exploited. Still it was the internal dynamic of Roman history in a state of crisis, not the ambition of Caesar, that best explains the demise of the republican constitution. The internal logic of the crisis made use of Caesar, but it might have made use of another.<sup>46</sup> For a similar case, we might consider Edmund Burke's prescient claim that the French Revolution must end with the rule of a



military general. If Napoleon hadn't stepped into this role, the Revolution would have found a replacement.

## 6. From Hegel to Marx: The Dialectic as Human Labor

Of course, the post-Kantian framework plainly acknowledges Hegel's tendency to talk about organisms, artworks, and institutions as purposively structured wholes that cannot be properly explained in terms of causal laws. However, their Kantian epistemic strategy leads them to treat such talk as an extension of Kant's arguments in the *Critique of Judgment*, as a mere recognition that we sometimes find it useful or even necessary to conceptualize things as if they were intrinsically purposive. At its core, nature remains of a realm governed by laws of efficient causality, even if these efficiently governed entities sometimes also come to express normative, logical or purposive relations. Here again we might take linguistic utterances as a guiding example. The justificatory and logical relations that hold between linguistic utterances can never be captured in terms of the empirical laws that govern their physiological production. The doxastic commitments entailed by a particular string of sounds depends on the broader language as interrelated collections of utterances, not on the physiological processes or the neural activity that produced this particular string of sounds. In language we have logical relations that can neither be grounded in nor translated into the register of causal law. However, this distinction does not make these logical relations unnatural in any ontological sense. Thus, the Sellarsian picture is naturalistic in ontology but strictly dualistic with regard to categorial register.

Hegel rejects this strict dualism of categorial register, and he treats his Aristotelian ontology as philosophically prior to his epistemology. As a philosophical modern, the Kantian insists that epistemology should precede ontology. As a proponent of the Copernican Revolution, she argues that ontological claims are always only relative to the conceptual activities of the knowing subject. Hegel denies the modern and the Copernican move. He argues that every epistemological project already presupposes ontological commitments. Modern epistemology always tacitly—and illicitly—presupposes some basic ontological distinction, such as that between mind and world, subject and object, language and sense data and so on. Hegel thus rejects the purported primacy of epistemology, the presumption that some method or account of knowing must precede and underwrite the ontological claims that emerge in all actual cases of knowing.<sup>47</sup>

Hegel further rejects every rigid distinction between thought and object. He instead holds that subjectivity or thought is always dialectically intertwined with the material processes on which it reflects. In other words, Hegel's account of knowledge presupposes that human beings are natural, purposive, and self-organizing processes. For Hegel, the

practical formation of the material world—this includes (a) the biological organization of our organs, tissues and food; (b) the habitual formation of our body; and (c) the active formation of raw materials and tools—always precedes and grounds our theoretical attempts to conceptualize the world. More specifically, our conscious reflection or self-conscious awareness always emerges from our attempt to re-form the recalcitrant materials and navigate the total environment.

Lest anyone think this account places excessive emphasis upon pragmatic or practical considerations at the expense of Hegel's obvious concern with theoretical speculation, even with some kind of theological contemplation, we might first note that a necessary awareness of and concern for totality emerges with distinctly human—that is, non-instinctual—action. The creative inauguration of new forms of action forces us to attend consciously to the environment and its indefinite limits. This conscious and highly dependent fragility of human aims guides our fundamental aspiration to be at home in what is other, to reach out and comprehend totality. Thus, metaphysical speculation, concern with the whole that surrounds and grounds our projects, is inherent to human beings as non-instinctual creatures.<sup>48</sup> Second, we should note that, for Hegel, the fundamental human quest to be at home in the other involves not only the practical transformation of an unruly world but also a theoretically guided submission of the self to the world in its totality. Given his undeniable but potentially extractable theological commitments, Hegel moves beyond Marxist and at least occasionally Kantian aspirations of enforcing human value on an inherently valueless and inchoate nature.<sup>49</sup> Again, for Hegel, reason is in nature, and the normative-transformative relationship between human subjectivity and nature moves in both directions. We prescribe binding normative ends to nature (and the objectified social world that is our received inheritance), but these ends generally reflect and necessarily remain responsive to the normatively binding ends that nature (and our inheritance) have always inscribed on us.<sup>50</sup> Finally, we should note that for Hegel, the highest object of human contemplation is human history itself, construed as the unitary, purposive and ongoing transformation of the natural and then inherited social world. Thus, Hegel's emphasis on theological contemplation ultimately takes human practice as its highest object. For Hegel, theory thus always points us back to practice as its ground and highest end.

Rational thought emerges from reflection upon a kind of practical activity where relatively brute causes and self-determining purposive actions comingle without rigid distinction. The practical constitution of the object through work or the material formation of the world simultaneously determines the object and our consciousness of it. As a largely habitual and prereflective activity, the practical constitution of the object frequently transforms a range of initially brute causal impingements into elements in a purposive system, though this transformation is always

only tentative and partial. In this picture, the sharp Sellarsian distinction between efficient causes and normative reasons becomes a relative, highly iterated and dynamic Aristotelian relation between matter and form. Construed as a self-enclosed domain, the practice of giving and evaluating reasons remains extremely fragile and largely impotent in the face of external forces. Construed as a partial reflection upon an ongoing, multi-centered, multilayered process of material synthesis and formation, rational deliberation can take comfort in knowing that rational and normative relations are already in the world. Pace Kant, human thought does not first bring rational structure to the world of experience, but rather, it seeks always to reconcile its own conscious conceptual processes with the dialectically fissured processes of material formation or work that gave it birth.

## Notes

- 1 Wilfrid Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 3, 8.
- 2 For a further discussion of some of these non-Kantian and anti-Copernican antecedents, see Songsuk Susan Hahn, *Contradiction in Motion*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), 9–35.
- 3 Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 6.
- 4 Georg Lukács, *Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins*. (Darmstadt: Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, 1984), 488.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 516.
- 6 For forceful indictments of the limiting role that the descriptive/normative or is/ought distinction plays in contemporary political theory, see Raymond Geuss, *Philosophy and Real Politics*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008); Michael J. Thompson, “Ontology and Totality: Reconstructing Lukács’ Concept of Critical Theory,” in Michael J. Thompson (ed.), *Georg Lukács Reconsidered*. (New York: Continuum, 2011); and Georg Lukács, *Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein*. (Berlin: Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, 1968), 342–357.
- 7 For a sustained development and defense of an inherently synthetic account of sociology and epistemology, see Michael Morris, *Knowledge and Ideology*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
- 8 With Beiser, I therefore agree that Hegel’s absolute idealism involves a much greater degree of “naturalism” and “realism” than Kant’s critical idealism. Beiser, *German Idealism*, 355–6. I likewise accept Lukács assessment: “For Hegel, nature in general had the same non-anthropomorphic objectivity that it did for the great philosophers of the 17th century,” Lukács, *Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins*, 473.
- 9 Karl Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte*. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2009), 150. See also Georg Lukács, *The Young Hegel*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1977), 537–567.
- 10 Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, 76. See also John McDowell, *Mind and World*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 5; and John McDowell, *Having the World in View*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 4–5.

- 11 Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, 74. See also Robert Brandom, *Articulating Reasons*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 47–49.
- 12 McDowell, *Mind and World*, 8.
- 13 Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, 75.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 68–9.
- 15 G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke*. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986), x, 12. Compare with Marx's very similar critique of abstract empiricism. See Michael Morris, "The German Ideology and the Sublation of Idealism," in Allegra de Laurentiis (ed.), *Hegel and Metaphysics*. (Boston, MA: Walter de Gruyter, 2016), 203–207.
- 16 Hegel, *Werke*, VI, 227–8.
- 17 *Ibid.*, IX, 11.
- 18 *Ibid.*, IX, 14.
- 19 *Ibid.*, X, 11.
- 20 Robert Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfaction of Self-Consciousness*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 36–7. Robert Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 211–215.
- 21 Frederick Beiser, *Hegel*. (New York: Routledge, 2005), 160.
- 22 Hegel, *Werke*, IX, 62–3.
- 23 For a contemporary articulation and defense of these claims, see Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
- 24 G. E. M. Anscombe helpfully designates this as "Aristotelian necessity." See *Collected Philosophical Papers*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981) III, 139. Quoted in Foot, 2001, 15.
- 25 Hegel, *Werke*, VI, 349.
- 26 Hegel, *Werke*, VI, 350.
- 27 Robert Pippin, "Kant on the Spontaneity of the Mind," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 17, no. 2 (1987): 459.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 468.
- 29 Morris, "The German Ideology and the Sublation of Idealism," 218–225, 234–239.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 36–64.
- 31 Pippin, "Kant on the Spontaneity of the Mind," 469.
- 32 Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, 23.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 96.
- 34 *Ibid.*, 22.
- 35 *Ibid.*, 147.
- 36 Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 6.
- 37 *Ibid.*, 7.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 7.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 10.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 11–2.
- 41 Morris, "The German Ideology and the Sublation of Idealism," 276–290.
- 42 Hahn, *Contradiction in Motion*, 66–70.
- 43 Lukács, *Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins*, 519–523.
- 44 Hegel, *Werke*, VI, 75–6.
- 45 Morris, "The German Ideology and the Sublation of Idealism," 36–94.
- 46 Hegel, *Werke*, XII, 44–8.
- 47 Morris, "The German Ideology and the Sublation of Idealism," 234–9.
- 48 A central emphasis on totality as a principle ontological category further distinguishes the proto-Marxist framework from the post-Kantian

interpretation, which construes Hegel's discussion of totality and the absolute as a commitment to semantic and/or doxastic holism, not as a return to certain crucial elements in the metaphysical tradition. See, Beiser, *Hegel*, 57–61; Beiser, *German Idealism*, 351–5; Frederick Beiser, "Hegel, a Non-Metaphysician?" *The Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain*, vol. 16, no. 2 (1995): 1–13; Lukács, *Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein*, 181–191. Compare with: Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, 178–209.

49 Immanuel Kant, *Werkausgabe*. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1977), XI, 85–102.

50 Beiser, *German Idealism*, 355–9.

## 8 Objective Spirit

### Hegel's Normative Social Ontology

*Kevin Thompson*

The aim of this chapter is to offer a distinctly systematic interpretation of the concept that stands at the very core of Hegel's philosophical science of right: objective spirit. I do this by contrasting a systematic account with what I propose to call the representationalist reading that has been the dominant interpretive paradigm for understanding this concept. In this account, objective spirit is said to denote the historically existent array of social customs, mores and manners and the languages, prejudices and thought forms—in a word, the historical conventions—by which a society organizes and understands its uniquely shared existence. I argue that, for Hegel, this paradigm actually presupposes, rather than justifies objective spirit and that this bears a twofold result: (1) It renders the norms and structures of sociality it sets forth vulnerable to the skeptical challenges of the Agrippan trilemma making objective spirit either arbitrary, viciously circular or open on an infinite regress, and (2) it sacrifices the normativity of objective spirit leaving its institutions and practices but dogmatic shackles or restrictions on freedom.

A truly systematic justification of objective spirit must suspend any and all commitments, whether tacit or explicit, to preconceptions about both thought and the world, and in this case, the social world, that it inhabits. A philosophical science of objective spirit must seek to do nothing other than attend to the immanent conceptual unfolding of its object—in this case, right—for it is only in abiding by this radical stricture of complete methodological immanence that the dogmatism and skepticism of the representationalist model can be avoided. But what then does such a method as this mean for the concept of objective spirit? What would a truly immanent, non-representationalist concept of objective spirit be?

The chapter is divided into three parts. The first sets out the contrast between the representationalist and systematic accounts of objective spirit focusing, in particular, on the way in which the deduction of right from freedom entails its objectivity. The second part takes up the idea of objectivity and shows how it sets the standard for a hierarchy of types of normativity from the principles of personhood and subjectivity to the

institutional strictures of *Sittlichkeit*. Finally, the third part concludes by demonstrating how the systematic senses of objectivity and the hierarchy of right that follows from this provide the basis for the master argument of objective spirit.

## I. Objective Spirit

Objective Spirit is the concept under which Hegel elaborates the philosophical science of right in the system set forth in the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline*.<sup>1</sup> And though the concept is explicitly referred to only in a couple of minor passages in the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* itself, it, nonetheless, marks a crucial distinction that provides an essential pathway into the concept of right and into the science that this text sets forth.

In the system, Objective Spirit is distinguished from Subjective Spirit in terms of their different relationships to the domain of nature. Subjective Spirit is an account of the various self-relational expressive movements of organisms that includes, at its pinnacle, a treatment of the will, agency and freedom. Hegel tells us that all these forms are defined by their “finding (*vorfinden*)” the natural world as always already given, as their “presupposition” (Enz. [1817] § 306 [§ 305]), and, in turn, their seeking to make this their own.

Objective Spirit, by contrast, does not simply presuppose nature. Rather, it is, Hegel tells us, an account of the “originating or setting up (*Erzeugen*) of spirit’s own world as a world posited (*gesetzen*) by it” (Enz. [1817] § 306 [§ 305]). Hegel clearly appeals to this same concept in the following line from the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*: “the system of right is the realm of actualized freedom, the world of spirit produced (*hervorgebraucht*) from out of itself as a second nature” (GPR § 4; cf. Enz. [1817] § 400). Objective Spirit is thus a world, one set up or posited in the movement of manifestation that is the freedom of the will. Now Hegel shows that the activity of the will is always set in motion by virtue of the world of nature—specifically the domain of practical feeling—on which it thus rests, and, in this sense, it is a second nature.<sup>2</sup> But what does it mean to claim that Objective Spirit is a world and a second nature that is the actualization of the will in its freedom and thereby serves as its ground?

It has been tempting, given these definitions—particularly with the invocation of the traditional notion, of “second nature,” affirmed from the Aristotelian tradition through Plutarch to Montaigne and beyond as the essence of custom or habit—to interpret Objective Spirit in sociological and descriptive terms, what I think is best referred to as a culturalist framework. This interpretation, which can be traced back to Hegel’s immediate contemporaries, has been most persuasively articulated and defended in our own time by Nicolai Hartmann, who, we should note,



clearly acknowledged his *departure* from Hegel's own systematic conception when he wrote in the early sixties that

[t]he concept of Objective Spirit is *not* a consequence of the system or a product of the dialectical train of thought. In fact, *it is not a speculative doctrine at all, but a straightforward descriptive concept*, a philosophical formulation of a basic phenomenon that allows at any time of demonstration and description *independently* of the [philosophical] standpoint. In a word, it is an original intuition, a discovery on Hegel's part of something that stands on its own two feet.<sup>3</sup>

On this interpretation, Objective Spirit is an account of the conventions by which a society organizes and understands its uniquely shared existence; it is simply given, an "original intuition," and, as such, stands in no need of further justification, a wholly descriptive and sociological concept.

This culturalist view still defines the parameters of more recent interpretations. The two principal variations in the current literature are the *linguistic model* and the *recognitionist model*. The former conceives of Objective Spirit as the norms or rules embedded in the common meanings and shared (principally, linguistic) practices by which the world that we inhabit together is rendered intelligible.<sup>4</sup> The latter defines Objective Spirit as the distinctly modern intersubjective conditions of mutuality that enable each of us to sense, interpret and realize our needs and interests as fully autonomous beings.<sup>5</sup>

The problem with these culturalist models of Objective Spirit, for Hegel, is that they are fundamentally representationalist. Each takes social life, and its interrelations, for granted: they presuppose the irreducibly shared rules and conventions of society that transcend the agency of individuals. To be sure, they derive distinctive features of this sociality as conditions of communication or genuine self-determination, but the determinate nature of such conditions is itself taken over from their empirical pregivenness. Institutions, in both these interpretations, are nothing more, then, than the always-already given layers that set down the horizons of sense within which mundane acts become meaningful. But insofar as these models take their object of inquiry over readymade from (empirical) intuition, it follows that they render the justifications and claims they make about the norms and structures of sociality vulnerable to the skeptical challenges of the Agrippan trilemma. Objective Spirit, in these readings, is therefore either arbitrary, viciously circular or opens on an infinite regress. And, as a result, these accounts render the principles, practices and institutions of Objective Spirit as unwarranted restrictions (*Beschränkungen*) of freedom, rather than as its immanent result, truth, and ground, what Hegel will call, simply, freedom's existence (*Dasein*).

Now it was precisely these kinds of concerns about the ability of forms of knowledge rooted wholly in representation to establish normative warrant that led Hegel to propose a distinctly systematic form of moral,

legal, social and political philosophy. And the hallmark of this approach is, of course, its unrelenting commitment to complete presuppositionlessness. Methodologically, this means that a truly systematic justification of right must begin by disengaging from all that it might take for granted; in this case, the social world that we inhabit. The philosophical science of right therefore must seek to do nothing other than attend to the immanent conceptual unfolding of its object—*Recht*—for it is only in abiding by this primary stricture of radical immanence that dogmatism and skepticism can be avoided. But this brings us back to our guiding question: “What would a truly immanent, nonrepresentational concept of Objective Spirit be?”

To address this question, let us begin by outlining the distinction between systematicity and representation as it frames Hegel’s account of right. In the Remark to GPR § 3, Hegel distinguishes the systematic concept of right from an empiricist (Romantic) conception of positive law or positive right. Positive right refers to the legal code and judicial system required by any actual state and, on an empiricist account, the justification of its normative authority is provided by inquiry into whether its institutions and practices flow from the unique historical needs, circumstances and traditions of the society over which it has been set in place.<sup>6</sup> As a systematic concept, Objective Spirit is thus not, as the Romantics held and as the contemporary culturalist interpretation and its variants now contend, the historically varying social rules and conventions that transcend the agency of individuals and within whose framework they operate.

Yet Hegel is equally clear that Objective Spirit is not to be equated with the rationalist (Enlightened Absolutist) view that positive law derives its authority from a wholly transcendent order of nature, natural right or natural law (*Naturrecht*).<sup>7</sup> In the remark to Enz. [1817] § 415, at the end of its account of property, contract, crime and punishment—what Hegel here calls simply Right but would come to call Abstract Right—he contends that a profound “ambiguity” lies in the term *Naturrecht* itself: On one hand, it may refer to right as “*something implanted* as it were *immediately* through nature,” or, on the other hand, it may conceive of right as “determined by the nature of the matter, that is, by the *concept*.”<sup>8</sup> The former sense, he notes, had been dominant in the modern tradition of political reflection and had given rise to the idea of a distinction between a state of nature, where the principles of natural right are supposed to govern, and civil or political society, where the prerogatives and duties prescribed by natural right must be restricted and freedom itself must be restrained or even sacrificed for the sake of security and survival. Objective Spirit is therefore not, as the Enlightened Absolutists contended, a pregiven providential natural order on which the institutions and practices of political society must be grounded and their actuality assessed.

But if Objective Spirit is neither of these representationalist conceptions—neither historical rules and conventions nor the transcendent principles of a natural order—then what is its systematic concept?

Recall again the definitions with which we began: Objective Spirit is (1) the “originating or setting up (*Erzeugen*) of spirit’s own world as a world posited (*gesetzt*) by it” (Enz. [1817] § 306 [§ 305]) and (2) “the system of right is the realm of actualized freedom, the world of spirit produced (*hervorgebraucht*) from out of itself as a second nature” (GPR § 4; cf. Enz. [1817] § 400). Objective Spirit is a world set in place by freedom, a world rooted in the domain of practical feeling and, therefore, a second nature. But how is this precisely not then a sphere of custom and tradition?<sup>9</sup>

On the systematic account, Objective Spirit is necessarily, at once, normative and ontological. We can best see this by examining Hegel’s deduction of the concept of right and its employment of the notion of the objectivity of freedom:

The absolute determination or, if one prefers, the absolute drive, of the free spirit (§ 21) is for its freedom to be its object (*Gegenstand*).  
(GPR § 27)

Hegel’s account of freedom holds that for any act to be free, the reflection guiding the act must take freedom itself as its ultimate motivating criterion. Picking up this thread, Hegel argues here that what follows from this is that for the will to be genuinely free, genuinely self-determining, it must take freedom itself as its highest good, as its ultimate end:

In having universality, itself as infinite form, as its content, object, and end (*Inhalte, Gegenstände und Zweck*), the will is free not only in itself, but also for itself—the Idea in its truth.  
(GPR § 21)

The immanent unfolding of the concept of freedom thus shows not only that freedom is the true essence of willing but that willing comes to be itself just insofar as it pursues its interests by taking freedom as its ultimate object, that is, as the highest good in view of which it ranks and assesses all other goods.

At GPR § 27, Hegel returns to this idea of freedom being the proper object of the will and argues, pivotally, that being such an object (*Gegenstand*)—that is, being the highest good, the ultimate object of free acts—entails that freedom must not only be a criterion, but it must also be objective (*objectiv*) and this in two distinct, though related, senses:

in the sense that it [the free spirit] is to be the rational system of the spirit itself, and in the sense that this system is to be immediate actuality (§ 26).

(GPR § 27)

Now this twofold sense of the objectivity of freedom, I contend, defines, for Hegel, the systematic as opposed to the representational concept of Objective Spirit. But what precisely does this twofold sense mean?

Note that Hegel refers us here back to GPR § 26 where he tells us that the will can be said to be *objektiv* in three senses. The first is where the will accords with its own concept, that is, with self-determination, and is thus most truly itself. The second is where the will is immersed in its object and is not in relation to itself. And the third is where the will fulfills its ends in external existence but in accordance with the principle of self-determination. In defining Objective Spirit as a world and this world as a second nature, Hegel is appealing to the first and third of these senses of objective, what I shall call the normative and the ontological respectively, and his claim is that they are necessarily mutually implicative: To be what it most properly is, freedom must be actual; for freedom to be actual, it must be in accord with its concept, which is to say that freedom must not only be a principle of action but normative and ontological as well.<sup>10</sup>

Let us consider each of these senses in more detail. The normative sense has to do with the nature of universality. Hegel had argued in his account of practical feeling in Subjective Spirit that, when judged in terms of the principle of self-determination, the range of practical affects—feelings, desires, passions or interests—can be purified of their subjective immediacy, ranked with respect to one another and raised to the universality of form that their content, their ought character, always already demands. He now argues that the universal standing of these principles, that they are authoritative for everyone and at all times, flows not only from their being specified by the concrete measure of freedom, that is, by its form of self-relation, but also from their actually being posited by this kind of willing itself. That is to say, freedom becomes objective when the motivational wellsprings from which the will acts, its particularities, are actually promulgated by itself as universally valid. Freedom in this initial sense of objectivity is thus constituted in and through the will's reflective purifying and positing of its own determinations as the objective principles with which it is itself, in turn, obligated to comply. It is in this sense that the will can be said to fully accord with its own concept.

The objectivity of freedom refers in the first instance, then, not, as the representationalist cultural model holds, to a set of habits or customs or even to the rules or conventions of a shared life but to the collection of universally binding norms that constitutes the will's fundamental duties, what Hegel calls the "rational system of the will's determinations" (GPR § 19; cf. GPR § 27). Hegel's point is that the rightfulness or normativity of such principles, their authoritativeness, is something with which they are endowed by virtue of their being essential elements that define genuinely free willing. It is thus the will's distinctly autonomous positing

that sets the mark for what is right. Consequently, freedom can be said to be objective in this first sense as a result of the will's unique activity of taking up its own particularity, purifying it of its immediacy, and, from it, creating and setting in place the system of norms to which it is then bound. Objectivity as normative universality therefore originates in the unique self-legislating activity of the will or, as Hegel puts it, the activity of the will consists in "sublating (*aufzuheben*) the contradiction between subjectivity and objectivity and in translating (*übersetzen*) its ends from their subjective determination into an objective one, while at the same time remaining *with itself* (*bei sich*) in this objectivity" (GPR § 28; cf. GPR § 22).

Turning now to the ontological meaning of the objectivity of freedom, Hegel argues that for the rational system of norms that the will engenders through its self-legislative activity to be truly universal, truly authoritative, truly right, must be concretely actual as well. The objectivity of freedom cannot simply be a matter of universal validity for this would leave the object of the will's positing, namely right itself, as a set of unrealized norms standing over against the immediacy of the external world. In this sense, the will would not be truly existent. As such, the form of the norms that it sets down would still be in discord with their content. Consequently, for freedom to be truly objective, it must be embodied in determinate and concrete existence, what Hegel in the earlier passage refers to as "immediate actuality," and this means that the universal validity of right must be institutional as well.<sup>11</sup> Freedom is objective in this sense, then, only insofar as it is, we could say, housed in resilient structures whose normative and symbolic content and associated practices define and sustain a rightful, and that is a just, social order.<sup>12</sup>

Hence, to say that Objective Spirit is a world and a second nature, systematically, is to say that it is a set of interdependent normative institutions and practices that embody and thus house, in making possible and in supporting, the freedom of Subjective Spirit, a set of actually existent norms that are binding because they are the essential determinations of the will's freedom incorporating its natural motivating affects, its first nature, in accordance with the concrete universality of the principle of freedom. Accordingly, Hegel concludes the deduction of right with the following famous definition:

*Right* is any existence (*Dasein*) in general that is the *existence* of the *free will*.—Right is therefore in general freedom, as idea.  
(GPR § 29)

As the conclusion to the systematic justification of right, this definition must be read, fundamentally, in two ways. First, right is the result (*Resultat*) of freedom. It is that concept to which the immanent unfolding of the concept of freedom—its becoming concrete—necessarily leads.

Accordingly, right is the embodiment of what it is to will, what it is to be free; it is the actuality of the concept of freedom, freedom as idea. But this deduction also establishes that right is not just the result of freedom, but it is its ground (*Grund*) as well. Right, then, is what enables the will to be free. Willing is what it truly is, namely autonomous, if and only if it is embodied in some objectively existent “thing”: some determinate kind of end, duty or institution. Right, in this sense, is the otherness in and through which willing is able to express its interests, control itself in doing so, and thus be genuinely self-determining, all of which is to say that right is nothing other than Objective Spirit, the objectivity of freedom, its existence, rather than its restriction. It is the rational system of norms that constitutes the will’s essential ends and these ends only as they are concretely actualized in a social-political world composed of institutions specified wholly by them.

Now it is important to note that, with this account of the concept of Objective Spirit and the deduction of right, we have only reached the beginning of the science of right proper. Hegel is clear that the systematic concept of right is but its “determinate *starting point* (Anfangspunkt)” (GPR § 2). The task of the science is “to observe the immanent development of the matter itself” (GPR § 2). That is to say, the subject of the science of right—withstanding what one may gather from the current literature—is not freedom, or practical agency, or the justification of right, or even recognition. Rather, it is the vigilant commitment to set aside all presuppositions and unfold the determinations of the concept of right precisely and only as these determinations flow immanently and necessarily from the concrete nature of the concept itself. Now, an analysis of these determinations is, of course, beyond the purview of the present essay, but it will be useful to complete our examination of the systematic conception of Objective Spirit by considering the basic structure of Hegel’s account. To do so requires exploring two of its most crucial features: (1) the science’s fundamental organizing principle, what I propose to call the Axiom of the Hierarchy of Right, and then (2) its core line of argument, the Master Argument of the Science of Right.

## II. The Hierarchy of Right

Right is, as we have seen, both the result and the ground of freedom and Hegel refers to this at GPR § 30 in a rather startling, and little commented upon, way: Right, he says “is, above all, something *sacred* (Heiliges) solely because it is the existence of the absolute concept, self-conscious freedom” (GPR § 30). Now by this odd turn of phrase, Hegel is not saying that right is divine (*Göttliches*); rather, he is marking, at once, its unique status—that, as the existence of freedom, and thus as genuinely authoritative, right stands apart from everything else that simply exists—and its wholeness in the sense of being complete, self-sufficient.<sup>13</sup> But

this declaration raises an important question. As it stands, the sacredness of right seems to be nothing more than a name for its vacuousness, its emptiness, for, as simply the existence of freedom, it appears to lack any definition, any concreteness. Accordingly, where does the determinacy of right, its definition, come from? Put slightly differently, how are the essential specifications that comprise right and are thus the proper object of the science at hand here to be spelled out?

Hegel acknowledges this issue—designating it the “formalism of right”—and responds by laying down the axiom that will govern the very structure of the science of right itself:

The *formalism* of right, however, . . . arises out of the differences in the development of the concept of freedom. By contrast with the more formal, that is, *more abstract*, and hence more restricted kind of right, the sphere and stage of spirit, in which spirit has determined and actualized within itself the further moments contained in its Idea, has, as *more concrete*, a higher right, for it is richer within itself and more truly universal.

(GPR §30)

The determinations of right flow directly from its being the result and ground of freedom and, precisely as such, they form a hierarchy. The determinations of right that are the more complete embodiment of freedom—that is, the ones that are more concrete, richer, more universal—have a higher normative standing (they are the “higher right”) than the ones that embody freedom to a lesser degree.

In one sense, of course, this axiom is simply an instance of the general principle that the result of a systematic demonstration is the ground of the concept from which it is derived. But more is actually being said here, and it is significant because, as we shall see, it serves to organize the entire account of right.

So what does it mean for something to count as a more complete actualization of freedom and thus to be a higher kind of right? A more complete embodiment of freedom is, first, one that fulfills more of the particularity of the will, more of the practical feelings, drives, desires, inclinations and interests that make up its motivating grounds, and second, it is one that fulfills them in a way that is more concrete, that is, more stable and assured, more securely sanctioned. To put the point another way, the forms of right that enable willing to be more fully and completely self-determining, to be with itself in and through their otherness, are of higher rank and are more authoritative, than those that serve this end to a lesser extent. In terms that we have just explored, the institutions of right have a higher normative status than the universal scope of its basic principles because the institutions and practices of right constitute a more complete



and determinate space in and through which agents are able to express themselves in a fully autonomous fashion.

To illustrate Hegel's claim with the divisions of the science of right to which we shall return in a moment, the axiom entails that Abstract Right, which is concerned primarily with the ownership of property, is a lesser form of right; that is, it is less binding because it embodies the universality of the will less than the more concrete universality of the particularity of the will, well-being and happiness, that is, the concern of Morality. And higher than either of these domains stands Ethicality because it fulfills these interests in the more concrete, more stable and thus more fully self-determining institutions of the family, civil society and the state. Accordingly, Ethicality is a domain of right that is higher, more right, more just, more binding, than either Abstract Right or Morality. And it is precisely this hierarchy—that the institutions of right are higher than its sheer principles precisely because the institutions embody these principles—that dictates the structure of the science as a whole.

Hegel notes that without the hierarchy it sets in place, that is, if all domains of right stood as equally normative, then they could come into irresolvable conflict with one another and this would require that one kind of right be restricted by or subordinated to another, rather than integrated and fulfilled by one another:

Morality, ethicality, the interest of the state—each is a distinctive right because each of these shapes (*Gestalten*)<sup>14</sup> is a determination and existence of *freedom*. They can only come into *collision* insofar as they are all on the same footing in that all are rights.

(GPR § 30A)

The problem of a collision or conflict between domains of right is only possible then insofar as they are not integrated into a proper hierarchy, that is, as Hegel puts it here, insofar as “they are all on the same footing.” Now what the Master Argument of the Science of Right, which we will examine shortly, purports to demonstrate is precisely the proper hierarchical integration of the domains of right so that they are not all on equal footing. But if we assume for a moment that they are all the same, what kind of collisions might occur?

An important conflict between the domains of right that Hegel himself treats in the main body of the science revolves around the “right of necessity (*Ius necessitatis*, *Notrecht*)” (GPR § 127). This right, which had its roots in the moral theology of the twelfth century and was taken up in the natural rights and social contract theories of the seventeenth century and is discussed by both Kant and Fichte, asserted that human beings may take whatever measures necessary to save their lives in situations of extreme need or necessity (*Not*). The canonical example of such a

situation was that of two shipwreck survivors clinging to a plank (later, a lifeboat) that is unable to sustain them both, and it asked whether either of them has the right to sacrifice the life of the other. Hegel takes up the question in a significantly different variation: In a condition where one's very existence is threatened due to a social, rather than a natural cause, does one have the right to take the property of another, where that property is needed for their survival, without proper transfer of its title, for example, stealing a loaf of bread in a condition of extreme deprivation?<sup>15</sup>

On Hegel's account, such a right poses a conflict between the rights of ownership established under Abstract Right and the right to well-being justified by the principles of Morality. Put simply, it is a question of whether there can ever be a legitimate right to steal. Hegel's contention is that if both of the forms of right in question are equal, that is, if they are equally binding, then there would be no way to adjudicate the conflict because in the absence of a criterion establishing their proper relationship, their proper rank, one right has as much validity as the other. Now, as we noted, the argument set forth in the science of right, following the Axiom of the Hierarchy of Right, purports to show that Ethicality is the higher domain of right that integrates these lower spheres and resolves such conflicts by establishing institutions that ensure that both the right to property ownership as well as the right to well-being are not only promulgated but enforced as well.<sup>16</sup> What, then, is this argument, what I have proposed to call the Master Argument of the Science of Right, that establishes the higher authority of Ethicality with respect to Abstract Right and Morality?

### III. The Master Argument

There is a fairly conventional way of portraying the main line of argument of Hegel's science of right: The norms of Abstract Right and Morality, that is, of property ownership and moral conscience, prove, on closer inspection, to be wholly and irrevocably vacuous and, as such, to be incapable of serving as principles to guide conduct or the development of character; therefore—in a kind of *reductio ad absurdum*—such normative guidance can only come from the concrete ethics, the Ethicality, that one's historically specific social role(s)—as family member, as producer/consumer, as citizen—can provide.<sup>17</sup> Now, while this outline is not completely without merit, it is, of course, clearly premised on what we have seen is a fundamentally representationalist interpretation of right, one that equates *Sittlichkeit* (which we have translated as Ethicality but which more often has been rendered as “ethical life”) with its ordinary nineteenth-century German sense, “customary social morality,” and *Sitte*, from which it derives, with “custom,” “habit” and “mores.” Hegel is making, as we have seen, a strictly systematic argument and, following the Deduction of Right and the Axiom of the Hierarchy of Right,

to demonstrate that one domain has a higher normative standing than another requires showing that it embodies freedom more completely and more concretely. So the question must be, “How is the core argument of the science of right an instance of systematic normative justification?”

Following the Deduction of Right and the Axiom of the Hierarchy of Right and in accordance with the strictures of systematic normative justification, to demonstrate that *Sittlichkeit* (Ethicality) has a higher normative standing than either Abstract Right or Morality requires showing that (1) *Sittlichkeit* is entailed immanently and necessarily by the unfolding of the concept of right as the objectivity of freedom and that (2) *Sittlichkeit* embodies freedom more completely and more concretely than do the domains of Abstract Right and Morality.

The argument proceeds in three stages. The *first stage* shows how the basic concept of right, precisely as the objectivity of freedom, necessarily develops into the domains of Abstract Right and Morality. The *second stage* then demonstrates that these domains necessarily reach their own immanent contradiction in the relationship of conscience and the good. Finally, in the *third stage*, the relationship of conscience and the good are shown to be necessarily plagued by abstract indeterminacy, and this very indeterminacy is then shown to entail the integration of Abstract Right and Morality in the domain of *Sittlichkeit*.

### *Stage I: Abstract Right and Morality*

Abstract Right sets forth the minimal principles—those of what Hegel calls Personhood—that are necessary for free willing to be possible: To be free requires being able to own things as property, and this is, ultimately, to be able to transfer title to (to alienate) that object via different kinds of contractual relations. However, the possibility of entering into such intersubjective agreements necessarily exposes ownership to the vagaries of individual choice (*Willkür*) and thus to caprice, for example, to the failure of contractual partners to fulfill their obligations, and thus specifically to various types of wrongs: non-malicious wrong, fraud and crime.

Abstract Right is an enforceable right in that wrongs committed against it are acts of coercion against the most rudimentary form of the existence of freedom. As such, such acts merit proportionate punishment. Yet to mete out such sanctions requires evaluating the acts in question as acts of choice and that necessarily means in terms of the motivations that compelled them. But precisely this requirement takes the concept of right beyond its initial determination as Abstract Right, the existence of freedom’s universality, to its more concrete determination as Morality, the existence of the will’s particularity, to what Hegel terms the domain of Morality.

Morality lays down the basic principles of willing as particular, concrete, determinate—the norms of what Hegel calls Subjectivity. To be

a subject is, fundamentally, to strive to bring about one's aims. But Hegel shows that in seeking after a purpose, one necessarily seeks after a broader set of aims than the specific goal of the action—for example, satisfaction of desires, happiness, well-being—that is to say, as Hegel puts it, one always necessarily *intends* more than one *purposes*: Satisfying one's own desires is necessarily, at the same time and ultimately, motivated by seeking after the desires, the well-being of others, what Hegel terms simply the totality of one's own and all others' ends, life itself.

### *Stage II: Conscience and the Good*

Hegel contends that the preceding analyses of Abstract Right and Morality show, on one hand, that the *universality* of Personhood (Abstract Right) immanently and necessarily entails, via the requirements of punishment, the *particularity* of Subjectivity (Morality; see GPR § 106), and, on the other, that the *particularity* of Subjectivity (Morality) immanently and necessarily entails, in the encompassing totality that is the ultimate good of life, the *universality* of Personhood (Abstract Right). As such, the first two determinations of right—its universality and its particularity—thus stand in a necessary relation to one another. This relation takes the form of the good, that is, the totality of vital needs, life; the “*fulfilled* universal, determined in and for itself”; and conscience, where subjectivity is the ultimate arbiter of what is good, “infinite and inwardly knowing subjectivity that determines its content within itself” (see GPR § 128). The relation is, Hegel notes, relative, which is to say, the relation is contingent and the relata separable, insofar as it expresses an obligation that ought to be fulfilled, but that may not: The good (the universality of right) ought to be realized in conscience (the particularity of right), and conscience ought to embody what is truly good.

As noted earlier, it is precisely to illustrate the relative nature of the claims of Abstract Right and Morality that Hegel, in this context, appeals to the “right of necessity (*Ius necessitatis*, *Notrecht*)” (GPR § 127). As an entitlement to take what is needed regardless of title when one is in a condition of extreme deprivation, it exposes the contingency of the relationship between the normative standing of the ownership of property and the needs of life.

Accordingly, as each requires the other to be what it is, but each equally is unable to be integrated with the other, both the good and conscience, and that is just both Abstract Right and Morality, stand empty of any determinate criterion and thus any valid content, that is, any obligations or duties (cf. GPR §§ 135, 138, and Enz. [1817] §§ 422–427). Observing the immanent unfolding of the concept of right thus shows that, precisely as the objectivity of freedom, right immanently and necessarily entails its own other: not only in the form of the possibility of wrong (GPR §§ 82–103 / Enz. [1817] §§ 409–414) but also ultimately as the very

possibility of giving precedence in action to particularity over universality, that is, to the possibility of evil itself (GPR §§ 139–140 / Enz. [1817] §§ 427–428). Abstract Right and Morality thus reach, in this possibility, a contradiction: Each requires the other, but neither is able to be integrated or fulfilled in the other.

### *Stage III: The Integration of Abstract Right and Morality in Sittlichkeit*

The third and crucial step of the argument takes up this moment and demonstrates that it entails the domain of *Sittlichkeit*. The case for this claim is set out most fully at GPR § 141. Accordingly, it is necessary to examine the line of argument developed in this passage rather carefully.

Hegel begins by summarizing the conceptual situation with regard to the problem of the universality and the particularity of right, and he formulates it precisely in terms of the problem of the relative relation of the good and conscience that we just reviewed in Stage II:

For the *good*, as the substantial universal of freedom, but as something still *abstract*, determinations of some kind and the principle for determining them (although this principle is identical with the good itself) are *required*; likewise, for *conscience*, the purely abstract principle of determination, it is required that its determinations should be universal and objective. Both of them [i.e., the good and the conscience], each raised to be totalities for themselves, become the determinateless (*Bestimmungslosen*) that *ought* (soll) to be determined.

Now, in what is surely the key move of the overarching train of argument of the science of right, Hegel infers from this mutual lack of determinacy of the good and conscience that their integration as moments of a unity that is more fundamental than either is already accomplished, albeit only implicitly, insofar as the sheer vacuousness of each renders them identical to one another:<sup>18</sup>

But the integration of both of these relative totalities into absolute identity is already accomplished *in itself* in that this very subjectivity of *pure self-certainty*, melting away for itself in its vanity (*Eitelkeit*), is *identical* with the *abstract universality* of the good.

The basic insight driving this admittedly strange inference—an outlandish move from *ought* to *is*—is the notion that without any determinacy, conscience and the good, which is to say Abstract Right and Morality, cannot be held distinct from one another and are thus necessarily identical. The evidence for this to which Hegel appeals here is the claim that without a criterion to justify its conduct, conscience, the particularity of

right, is necessarily free to indulge its every whim, making its behavior a condition that Hegel refers to as vanity, and this is just what the good, the criterion required by conscience, the universality of right, is, the endorsement of any and all whims, precisely insofar as it too is abstract. But rather than taking this insight as a sheer *reductio*, Hegel argues that the identity that these two moments together constitute is actually a totality that is itself distinct from the relative relationship of conscience and the good because, as the integration of the one in the other, the whole they form is concrete, which is to say determinate. As a result, and following the Axiom of the Hierarchy of Right, this totality is more fundamental, a higher, more authoritative, form of right than either conscience (Morality) or the good (Abstract Right), and it is properly that from which both necessarily derive their own normative validity.<sup>19</sup> This whole is *Sittlichkeit*:

[T]he identity—which is accordingly *concrete*—of the good and the subjective will, the truth of them both, is *ethicality*. (*Sittlichkeit*)

The remark to GPR § 141 lays out the basic organizing structure of this argument. Its key point is that the fundamental identity that conscience and the good form is set out explicitly; that is, as Hegel puts it, it is posited, just insofar as they “sublate themselves (*sich aufheben*).” By this, he means that, as indeterminate, the good and conscience negate their own independence, that is, their separability, their finitude, their limitedness, and precisely as equally indeterminate, they also thereby reveal their dependence on one another to be what each is. It is thus the self-sublation of each moment that shows them to be moments of a greater unity, a unity that becomes manifest only in and through the revelation of the reciprocal interdependence of these moments. In this way, *Sittlichkeit* is therefore proved to be the integrating unity that is, at once, the *result* and the *ground* of Abstract Right and Morality.

Hegel’s claim is that this identity is the basis for a systematic, rather than representationalist (what we have also called a culturalist), conception of *Sittlichkeit* and that this concept serves as the highest determination of right and thus as the proper culmination of the argument that the science of right seeks to make. The concreteness of *Sittlichkeit*, as a systematic concept, lies, then, not in its being a historically specific set of expectations embodied in the customs, conventions, and patterns of life of some definite society. One’s duties are not, in fact, prescribed by one’s historically contingent station. Rather, the concrete identity of conscience and the good, of the particularity and universality of right, denotes the institutional order (the ethical objectivity) that the complete actualization of freedom as self-determination demands—the ethical institutions, as Hegel shows, of the family, civil society and the state—and the dispositions (the ethical subjectivity) required to live in accordance with the norms

embodied in this order. Where the objectivity of freedom sets the standard for the determination of what these institutions must be, what their internal structures are and what their relationships with one another must comprise, there the potential conflicts between the principles of Abstract Right and Morality are resolved and the ethical objectivity of *Sittlichkeit* is able to be the rightful criterion to which ethical subjectivity—to live a life that exhibits true conscience, virtue, and rectitude—is obligated to measure up. It is in this sense, then, that Hegel is able to conclude that *Sittlichkeit* is the highest determination of Objective Spirit, as both a world and a second nature, because it is the domain where the universal validity of the principles of Abstract Right and Morality is embodied in determinate, interdependent, existent and normative social and political institutions. And *Sittlichkeit* is ultimately just what it means for right to be the “idea of right,” the result, truth and ground of freedom:

*Sittlichkeit* is the *idea of freedom* as the living good that has its knowing, willing, and, through its acting, its actuality, in self-consciousness just as these have their foundation existing in and for itself and their motivating end in ethical being—the *concept of freedom become the present world and the nature of self-consciousness*.

(GPR § 142)

## Notes

- 1 On the development of the concept of Objective Spirit in Hegel's thought, see Franz Rosenzweig, *Hegel und der Staat*, ed. Frank Lachmann. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2010, 1920<sup>1</sup>), 359–367; Jacques D'Hondt, “Genèse et structure de l'unité de l'Esprit Objectif,” in *Hegel: L'Esprit Objectif/L'Unité de l'Histoire*. (Lille: Association des publications de la faculté des lettres et sciences humaines de Lille, 1970), 99–112; and Jean-François Kervégan, “Die Objektivität des Objektiven Geistes,” in Andres Arndt and Jure Zovko (eds.), *Geist. Erkundungen zu einem Begriff*. (Hannover: Wehrhahn, 2009), 63–81. For the significance of the concept within the context of the history of political thought, see Manfred Riedel, “Framework and Meaning of ‘Objective Spirit’: A Conceptual Change in Political Philosophy,” in *Between Tradition & Revolution: The Hegelian Transformation of Political Philosophy*, trans. Walter Wright. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 3–30. On the place of Objective Spirit with the system of philosophical sciences, see Emil Angehrn, *Freiheit und System bei Hegel*. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1977), 153–161; Vittorio Hösle, “Die Stellung von Hegels Philosophie des objektiven Geistes in seinem System und ihre Aporie,” in Christoph Jermann (ed.), *Anspruch und Leistung von Hegels Rechtsphilosophie*. (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1987), 11–53; and Adriaan Peperzak, *Selbsterkenntnis des Absoluten: Grundlinien der Hegelschen Philosophie des Geistes*. (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1987), chap. III.
- 2 Hegel refers to “second nature” in an objective and a subjective sense. For the objective sense, where it designates institutions, forms of life, and social relations, see GPR § 151. For the subjective sense, where the phrase refers to stable dispositions, capacities, and attitudes, see, though the term itself is



not used in the first edition of the *Encyclopedia*, the account of habit at Enz. [1817] § 325.

For consideration of “second nature” in relationship to Objective Spirit, see Manfred Riedel, “Laws of Nature and Laws of Right: Problems in the Realization of Freedom,” in *Between Tradition & Revolution*, 57–75, esp. 59–64; and Adriaan Peperzak, “‘Second Nature’: Place and Significance of the Objective Spirit in Hegel’s *Encyclopedia*,” *The Owl of Minerva*, vol. 27, no. 1 (Fall 1995): 51–66.

For the rich history of the concept, see Gerhard Funke, “Natur, zweite (I),” in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 6. (Basel: Schwabe, 1984), 484–489, and Norbert Rath, “Natur, zweite (II),” in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 6, (Basel: Schwabe, 1984), 489–494, and also his *Zweite Natur: Konzepte einer Vermittlung von Natur und Kultur in Anthropologie und Ästhetik um 1800*. (Münster: Waxmann, 1996).

- 3 Nicolai Hartmann, *Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus*, ed. Zweite Auflage. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1960), 496 (emphases added).
- 4 Charles Taylor, *Hegel*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), esp. 478–488. This model has been taken up more recently in a more sophisticated and nuanced version in the semantic inferentialism of Robert Brandom (see his *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994) and the holism of Vincent Descombes (*The Institutions of Meaning: A Defense of Anthropological Holism*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), chap. 10).
- 5 Axel Honneth, *Kampf um Anerkennung: Zur moralischen Grammatik sozialer Konflikte*. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1994); and, more recently, see his explicit attempt to work out a critical appropriation, what he calls a “reactualization,” of Hegel’s political philosophy, *Leiden an Unbestimmtheit: Eine Reaktualisierung der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie*. (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 2001). This model is largely endorsed, with some important caveats, by the social agency theory of Robert Pippin; see his *Hegel’s Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), esp. Part III.
- 6 On the concept of right at work in the Late Romantic Historical School of Hugo and Savigny, see Elisabeth Weisser-Lohmann, *Rechtsphilosophie als praktische Philosophie. Hegels Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts und die Grundlegung der praktischen Philosophie*. (München: Wilhelm Fink, 2011), 74–87.
- 7 For discussion of Hegel in relation to the Natural Right tradition, see Norberto Bobbio, “Hegel und die Naturrechtslehre,” in *Materialien zu Hegels Rechtsphilosophie*, Band 2, ed. Manfred Riedel. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974), 81–108; Riedel, “Laws of Nature and Laws of Right,” 57–75; and Montserrat Herreo, “The Right of Freedom regarding Nature in Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*,” in Ana Marta González (ed.), *Contemporary Perspectives on Natural Law: Natural Law as a Limiting Concept*. (London: Routledge, 2008), 141–160.
- 8 It is worth noting here that the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* is actually only one of the two titles that Hegel gave the text that we are discussing. The other, appearing originally on the left-hand page opposite the more well-known title, was *Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft im Grundrisse. Zum Gebrauch für seine Vorlesungen* (Natural Right and Political Science in Outline. For use in his Lectures). Hegel is clearly making use of the term *Naturrecht* here in this title in the latter sense referred to at Enz. (1817) § 415 A: right as “determined by the nature of the matter, that is, by the *concept*.”

I seek to explain what that sense means in the account of Objective Spirit and Right that follows.

- 9 The approach taken in what follows to this question is closest to that developed by Jean-François Kervégan in “Le Droit entre Nature et Histoire: Hegel,” in Jean-François Kervégan and Heinz Mohnhaupt (eds.), *Recht zwischen Natur und Geschichte/Le Droit entre nature et histoire*. (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997), 223–256.
- 10 In his discussion of the senses of objectivity at GPR § 26, Frederick Neuhouser claims that the will wholly immersed in its object, the second sense of objective will set out in the paragraph, also plays a role in Hegel’s account insofar as individuals can be free, albeit in a limited sense, “simply in virtue of inhabiting an inherently rational (objectively free) social world, regardless of their subjective relation to the laws and institutions of that world.” (*Foundations of Hegel’s Social Theory: Actualizing Freedom*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 117) While I agree with this point and believe that it is faithful to Hegel’s theory, it does not, I argue, play a direct role in defining the twofold sense of objectivity to which Hegel is appealing at GPR § 27.
- 11 The normative ontological account of institutions for which I argue here disagrees with Benno Zabel’s proposal that institutions, for Hegel, are best understood as “praxis forms,” that is, as cultures of intersubjective recognition, and as “legal forms,” structures establishing status and guaranteeing freedom, as these notions fail to capture, I believe, the way in which the social and political institutions of right are ontologically objective precisely in the sense of “immediate actuality” to which Hegel refers at GPR § 27. See Benno Zabel, “The Institutional Turn in Hegel’s Philosophy of Right: Towards a Conception of Freedom Beyond Individualism and Collectivism,” *Hegel Bulletin*, vol. 36, no. 1 (2015): 80–104, esp. 86–89.
- 12 Accordingly, the intertwined accounts of Objective Spirit, Right, and *Sittlichkeit* (Ethicality) that follow hold Hegel’s theory to be a distinctive form of institutionalism. In this respect, they follow a line of interpretation first proposed by Dieter Henrich. Henrich argues that Hegel’s political theory is a form of what he calls “robust (*starken*) institutionalism,” which teaches that “the freedom of the individual will can only be realized in an order that, as itself objective, has the form of the rational will and thus includes the individual will entirely within itself, subsuming it under its own conditions, as always without alienation.” (“Vernunft in Verwirklichung” in Georg Friedrich Wilhelm [sic] Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts: Die Vorlesung von 1819/20 in einer Nachschrift*, ed. Dieter Henrich. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1982), 31).

While endorsing the basic institutionalist approach that Henrich outlines, Jean-François Kervégan has criticized Henrich’s version for subordinating the will of the individual wholly and completely to the institutional structures whereby it is enabled to be free. Kervégan thus argues for a more moderate “weak (*faible*) institutionalism” in its stead (see his *L’effectif et le rationnel: Hegel et l’esprit objectif*. (Paris: Vrin, 2007), 311–314, 366–371; on this point, cf. Allen Wood, *Hegel’s Ethical Thought*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 73–74).

- 13 The adjective *heilig* is derived from the same root as the verb *heilen*: to heal, to cure, to redeem, to make whole.
- 14 The term is ill chosen here as in the next paragraph, that is, at GPR § 32 & A (cf. GPR § 3A), Hegel clearly distinguishes between conceptual determinations (*Bestimmungen*) of right and their historical shapes (*Gestaltungen*). The

determinations follow the systematic development of the concept of freedom that we studied in chapter two, rather than any historical sequence. The science of right is thus, as we have argued, a distinctly systematic discipline, rather than some form of historical investigation.

- 15 See the excellent examination of this right and the account of the argument that Hegel mounts around it in Adriaan T. Peperzak, *Modern Freedom: Hegel's Legal, Moral, and Political Philosophy*. (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), 348–360. See also Dieter Henrich, “Vernunft in Verwirklichung,” 18–23, esp. 20–21; Wolfgang Schild, “Hegels Lehre vom Notrecht,” in Vittorio Hösle (ed.), *Die Rechtsphilosophie des Deutschen Idealismus*. (Hamburg: Meiner, 1989), 146–163; and Domenico Losurdo, *Hegel and the Freedom of Moderns*, trans. Marella and Jon Morris. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), chap. VII.

- 16 It should be noted that the issue of relative deprivation and its relationship to right that is at the core of the question of a right of necessity does reemerge in the account of Ethicality. Initially, it appears in the form of the problem of poverty (GPR §§ 241–243) and then in the problem of the formation of a group that, beyond simply the inequities of the distribution of goods, exhibits a common disposition of disaffection, estrangement or alienation from right itself, a group that Hegel refers to as a “rabble (*Pöbel*)” (GPR §§ 244–248).

These issues and whether the science of right is able to address them adequately are, of course, beyond the purview of the present chapter.

- 17 A neglected, but excellent example of this now fairly conventional way of understanding Hegel's overarching argument is W. H. Walsh, *Hegelian Ethics*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1969).

- 18 Though crucial, this inference is generally neglected in the scholarly literature. To cite three important examples:

Instead of grappling with the actual terms of the transition, Joachim Ritter appeals to the idea that Hegel seeks here to sublimate the Kantian moral standpoint, which he takes Morality to articulate, by the “‘ethical’ constitution of the free life of citizens constitutive for the Greek world.” (*Hegel and the French Revolution: Essays on The Philosophy of Right*, trans. Richard Dien Winfield. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), 162).

In his account of this transition, Ludwig Siep concludes that various aspects of Morality are “criticized, ‘conserved,’ and transposed to various degrees” in the determinate duties of a specific community of human beings without explaining the necessity behind this claim. See his “The ‘Aufhebung’ of Morality in Ethical Life,” in Lawrence S. Stepelevich and David Lamb (eds.), *Hegel's Philosophy of Action*. (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1983), 137–155.

Finally, in otherwise excellent accounts of Morality and Ethical Life, Allen Wood never explicitly addresses the transition from the former to the latter, other than to say that the relation between them is a “complex one.” (“Hegel's Critique of Morality,” in Ludwig Siep (ed.), *G. W. F. Hegel, Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997), 165; cf. his *Hegel's Ethical Thought*, chaps. 9–11).

Klaus Vieweg, on the other hand, provides an extensive analysis of the argument of GPR § 141 and helpfully compares it with the transition from Abstract Right to Morality. See his *Das Denken der Freiheit: Hegels Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*. (München: Wilhelm Fink, 2011), 223–228.

- 19 At Enz. [1817] § 429, Hegel had already formulated, at least in outline, an extremely compressed version of the argument he develops at GPR § 141:

The pure abstract good disposition (*Gesinnung*) is, within its own self (*innerhalb ihrer selbst*), the sublation (*Aufheben*) of the mediation of this

reflection and choosing in the simple universality of the good—the nothingness of what is nothing. This universality has, at the same time, in its concept and in this consciousness, the meaning of the unsayable or the completely immediate good—thus, the objective. Subjectivity, in this its own identity with the objective, has thus sublated (*aufgehoben*) the standpoint of relations and has passed into ethicality (*Sittlichkeit*).



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## Part III

# Metaphysics, History and the Structures of Ethical Life



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## 9 Family Structures as Fields of Historical Tension

### A Case Study in the Relation of Metaphysics and Politics

*Christopher Yeomans*

Without social formations including their concepts, by means of which they determine (whether reflexively or self-reflexively) their challenges and seek to meet them, there is no history, it cannot be experienced nor interpreted, not presented nor told.

—Reinhart Koselleck<sup>1</sup>

The separation between state and society is now understood to be a central aspect of the modern era. In fact, this separation can serve as a criterion for the transition into modernity, which then begins in England in the seventeenth century, in France in the early eighteenth century but in Germany first toward the end of the eighteenth century. An interpretation of modern European history along these lines often follows the following path: Originally the state counted as the highest and most general estate (*Stand*), and thus was characterized by the same form and kind of unity as the other estates, that is, as society (or, better, as the various overlapping *societies* clustered together in a geographical region). In the corporate society or *Ständegesellschaft* the state counted as one estate among others, first among *equals* (or second to the church). But in Germany there is a break in the late eighteenth century. Increasingly, rational criteria were developed for the planning and evaluation of state action. There was a parallel development for society, but with different rational criteria. The state built a professional administrative corps and promulgated universal laws, whereas in civil society new forms of association and modes of production outside the church, guilds and traditional estates were deployed. Out of this break grew a tension: the goals of the state and of the new civil society partially corresponded to each other but were not entirely congruent. Furthermore, the remaining corporate society did not recognize itself as goal-oriented at all and thus found itself in fundamental tension with both state and civil society. It is in this historical field of tension that classical German philosophy from Kant to Hegel is situated.

This history of the emergence of this field of tension shows that it has three corners: an older corporate society that was composed of the innumerable particularities of each estate and region, a new civil society that was stamped by universal conceptions of personal freedom, and a state that served as the increasingly powerful individual in the social field as a whole. For those reading with Hegelian eyes my thesis will already be apparent: This field of tension is to be understood not only as the field of contest on which the German Idealists meet each other in disputation, but also as a topic that is itself conceptualized by the German Idealists (even if only implicitly). This area is formed along three axes that correspond to the three corners of the field of tension. These three axes together make up a concept in the Hegelian sense of the term, which is formed by the dimensions of universality, particularity and individuality.

In my view, these three dimensions or “moments” of the Hegelian concept are not to be interpreted as themselves objects but, rather, as perspectives from which any item can be viewed.<sup>2</sup> *The* universal, *the* particular and *the* individual (or even *universals*, *particulars* and *individuals*) are best understood as limit cases in which the standpoint of the perspective is itself understood as a kind of object. But it is really rather a location in logical space, rather than an object with its own solidity and depth.

In a similar way, corporate society, civil society and the state must themselves be understood not so much as institutions that are objects of contemporary observation and philosophical perception but, rather, as perspectives from which different dimensions of such institutional objects as the family, law and property can be observed. In this way, the political philosophies of the German Idealists should be understood as ways of conceptualizing social reality that are philosophical expressions of the way society conceptualizes itself (i.e., from the three different social perspectives).<sup>3</sup> Though the way society conceptualizes itself is often put in an objective register of functions and causes, the philosophical conceptualization brings out the way these same relations can be put in a subjective register. It thus brings out the way that these relations are justificatory or normative rather than merely explanatory or functional.

Furthermore, these social perspectives have a temporal form: The *true* corporate society always lies in the past, the *true* civil society in the (far) future and the *true* state in the (near) future. They are never present in the present, as it were, and thus cannot be directly perceived.<sup>4</sup> In Reinhart Koselleck’s terms, the present is the temporal field of tensions of these “futures past,” and the actual social objects are institutions in that present are illuminated from these different temporal perspectives simultaneously.

I proceed to argue for this thesis as follows: First, because the conceptual patterns are complex and overdetermined, I begin with two examples from German history in order to illuminate the general perspective to be taken up. Then I sketch the institution of the family as

it is conceptualized by Kant, Fichte and Hegel in order to display their philosophical debate as itself a field of tension with these three inner dimensions. In this section I hope to show how philosophical disagreement about the family is itself a form of historical experience. In a third section I show that such a field of tension can also be found *within* the doctrines of the family propounded by *each* of the three philosophers. That is, I show how the field of tension between the philosophers' doctrines runs parallel to a field of tension internal to each philosopher. How and why this should be the case is a conceptual or metaphysical question that I try to answer in the fourth section by reference to an interpretation of Hegel's "idea" from his *Science of Logic*. Finally, in the fifth section, I return to Hegel to illuminate and evaluate his understanding of the family from this perspective.

The chapter thus travels the following indirect route: first, the way (Hegel's) world was, politically speaking; second, the way that Hegel and other political philosophers at the time tried to make sense of it; third, the metaphysics that makes sense of both the way the world was and the way political philosophers attempted to grasp it; and, finally, what that metaphysics tells us about the right way to grasp that political world (including normatively).

## §1. Examples from German History

### 1.1. Sexuality

My first example is from Isabel Hull's study *Sexuality, State, and Civil Society in Germany, 1700–1815*. Hull attempts to describe not the institution of the family but, rather, the pattern of sexual behavior and the changes in this pattern in relation to the more general changes of the state and society in the eighteenth century. Though Hull uses other terms, this network can be conceived using the triangular field of tension described earlier.

The following passage from Hull contains both a specific example as well as the general form of this network:

In the course of the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century, *Sittlichkeit* became more and more identified with matters exclusively sexual. . . . The Grimms' examples of this shift in usage toward the narrowly sexual are literary sources from the late eighteenth century (Wieland, Schiller, Goethe). Had the Grimms included more legal sources, they would have seen that the 'older examples' of the more sexual usage are typical of legal discourse and that this usage was then, in the late eighteenth century, taken over by the literary shapers of civil society, who developed the sexual accent even further and, by the nineteenth century, had surpassed official usage, which still

continued to retain some of the diffuseness characteristic of earlier times. In the following pages we will see this pattern again, whereby the state shaped and accentuated a way of interpreting or using sexual behavior, passed this along to nascent civil society, which in its turn developed this interpretation or usage independently of the state. This incomplete dialectic describes the formation of our modern conception of 'sexuality.'<sup>5</sup>

Here the term *Sittlichkeit* and its change in meaning from a general concept of social uprightness to a narrower conception of sexual mores is the specific topic. Naturally this thesis has interesting consequences for our understanding of Hegel's doctrine of *Sittlichkeit* or ethical life, but here I want to focus on the Hegelian conceptual form of the dialectic Hull describes.

In order to see this form more clearly we must first ask, "From what source is this form of interpretation of sexual behavior taken over by the state and 'shaped and accentuated'?" Clearly this way of regarding sexual behavior cannot originate in the same society—civil society—which later takes this form of interpretation over from the state and generalizes it. Rather, the state took over this form of interpretation from corporate society (*die Ständegesellschaft*), here understood as the customs and traditions (*Sitten und Gebräuche*) of the majority of the population. The process of taking over these meanings ran primarily through the attempted regulation of sexual behavior since the attempt to manage and direct the sexual activity of the population by means of laws required sufficient contact between the laws and the activity to be regulated by them, and thus, the state was forced to familiarize itself at least with these customs and traditions of the population.<sup>6</sup> Thus, we have a circuit, which leads from corporate society through the state to civil society.

Each position is something like an electronic component in an electrical circuit: It influences the circulating meaning (here, that of *Sittlichkeit*) in regular ways, similar to the way the electronic components influence the circulating electrons. This regular influence of the social stations in our circuit could certainly be described in a variety of registers, but here I want to remain at the logical level: The corporate customs normally push toward particularity ("the diffuseness characteristic of earlier times"), the governmental intervention toward individuality ("shaping and accentuating" through a legal system) and the civil-social<sup>7</sup> opinions toward universality (the same sexual system for all citizens). But a misunderstanding suggested by the analogy should be avoided, which would be to think that the cycle runs from one institution to another to another. When we understand by *institution* a goal-oriented and integrated set of norms, then *Sittlichkeit* is the institution in this example, and the societies and the state are *perspectives* from which this institution is observed and regulated.<sup>8</sup>

## 1.2. Bavaria

Partially in order to dispel a second misunderstanding—that the meanings here are exclusively linguistic—our second example deals with the changes in the political representation of social interests in Bavaria. In the so-called *Vormärz* period (i.e., the period from the turn of the nineteenth century leading up to the March 1848 revolutions), the primary goal of the Bavarian state was to build a unified individual state out of the many lands that were first brought together in 1806/1815. This process of state building was pursued in the face of resistance by the corporate estates, who wanted to protect their previous prerogatives and privileges. But it was also simultaneously subject to the civil-social criticism that the proposed constitution didn't push fast enough toward this future unity.

In *Vormärz* Bavaria, the corporate perspective is easiest to recognize in the nobility and clergy. Both groups opposed the growing power of the state and in particular the power of the bureaucracy. In addition, a civil-social opposition set itself against the state, in particular against the estates system of the new constitution. Following the promise of the Vienna Congress, in 1818 Bavaria had promulgated a constitution with a bicameral legislature (a chamber of councilors [*Reichsräte*] and a chamber of deputies [*Abgeordneten*]). The members of the chambers were corporately determined: Roughly speaking, members of the high nobility and clergy belonged to the chamber of councilors, whereas representatives of the universities, towns, markets and other corporations to the deputies. Though in principle the second chamber was to represent the interests of civil society, its membership was constituted in a way that corresponded to no contemporary social actuality since that membership was derived instead from precisely the traditional prerogatives that were anathema to the new civil society. In the chamber of councilors, the nobility and clergy remained even more tightly tied to their traditional, pre-political order and thus had no relation to the newly arising liberal/civil-social opposition. In the estates assembly, then, the liberal/civil-social perspective was primarily represented by deputies who were civil servants (either as professors at the university or bureaucrats in the towns) and who were therefore also servants of the state.

In this context, the civil-social critique of the constitution was that it concerned only artificial or *state* estates, whereas in reality there were only two estates: those with traditional privileges and prerogatives taken together on one side and the general estate on the other side (which was therefore entirely without representation in the assembly). Even though this form of privilege was soon to be abolished, Wolfgang Zorn's view is that these artificial states nonetheless played an important role in precisely that abolition:

These state-estates may be understood as an element of corporate stabilization in the middle of modern constitutionalism. Their

institution built, as it were, a bridge between the political freedom which was further-advanced in Bavaria since 1818 in comparison with Prussia and the even stronger social bond as compared with Prussia.<sup>9</sup>

This bridge then made it possible for Bavaria in 1848 to move into modernity with political equality whereas at that time Prussia regressed to the so-called *Dreiklassenwahlrecht* (three-class voting franchise) in which voting rights were apportioned by income (tax status). Here I just want to point out the temporal dimension: the corporate recourse to traditional (i.e., past) particularities stabilized the near future because it enabled an equilibrium, and in that equilibrium the development into the further future could take place.

The circuit described here also does not run from one institution to another: as noted, the legislative advocates of the civil-social critique of the state estates were primarily servants of the state, that is, civil servants (as were roughly half of the chamber of deputies). In this debate over the proper structure of the legislature, the institution “representation” is exchanged and shared between these different temporal perspectives. In the next section I attempt to comprehend the philosophical debate about the institution of the family between Kant, Fichte and Hegel as precisely such an exchange between temporal perspectives. In order to avoid a third misunderstanding, that is, that this circuit is a necessary progressive development, I begin with the civil-social perspective before taking up the governmental and then corporate perspectives.

## §2. The External Field of Tension

It is crucial to recognize at the start that the importance of the concept of “family” is relatively new in the eighteenth century. For example, in his comprehensive study of the documents of the East Prussian village Stavenow over three and a half centuries before 1840, the historian William Hagen could only find a few uses of the term.<sup>10</sup> Instead, the writings always referenced particular familial relationships, for example, step-mother and stepchild or mother-in-law and son-in-law. According to Grimm’s *Wörterbuch*, in the course of the eighteenth century the term *Familie* asserted itself everywhere and replaced other German words. The only word with a similar extension that remained in force was *Haus*. This is not surprising, since a very important development in the *Vormärz* period is precisely the replacement of the *Hausstand* as a social unity by the family.<sup>11</sup> From the preceding discussion we should expect that this change was also accomplished through the triangular dialectic, and in the following I attempt to follow its traces in the philosophical debate.

## 2.1. Fichte

I begin with Fichte because the family is much more important for him than for Kant or even for Hegel. Neither Kant nor Hegel has reserved as important a role for the family as Fichte:

[H]ow can one lead the human species from nature to virtue? I answer: only by reproducing the natural relation between the two sexes. There is no moral education of humankind, if it does not begin from this point.

(*Foundations* 273/GA 4, 104)<sup>12</sup>

It is thus no surprise that Fichte has a lot more to say on this topic: In the critical edition of the *Foundations of Natural Right* the discussion of the family extends to fifty-four pages, twice as long as Kant's discussion in the *Doctrine of Right* and Hegel's discussion in the *Philosophy of Right* put together.

With reference to our triangular field of tension, Fichte represents the new standpoint of civil society. In fact, the emphasis on the central role of the family is itself an important part of this newer civil-social perspective and differentiates it from the older corporate-social perspective. In corporate society, no one thought that marriage was a universal institution appropriate for all persons, whereas Fichte claims that "[i]t is the absolute vocation of each individual of both genders to marry" (GA 5, 291). Furthermore, Fichte attempts to unify the newly arisen moral interest in sexual practices with strict limits of state power in relation to private life. The second part to be unified—that is, the limits of state power—has often been noticed in Fichte. Fichte attempts to show that the power of the state should be used to establish and protect both the external rights and the inner moral private sphere of the nuclear family. Furthermore, Fichte argues for defending the institution both from the possibility of governmental intervention and traditional-corporate interference. He holds not only adultery and cohabitation outside of marriage but also (at least potentially) infanticide to be non-punishable. In addition, he defends the legality of divorce. The first part—that is, the new moral interest in sexual practices—has received less attention, but is just as much characteristic of the new civil-social perspective. Fichte argues that "[f]or the woman chastity is the principle of all morality" (GA 5, 289) and "[t]he unmarried person is only half a human being" (GA 5, 291). In fact, Fichte repeatedly transforms social experiences into moral characteristics, corporate social reputation into the ethical dignity that marked the value of those civil-social relations that were understood through the lens of universal human freedom.

This transformation is achieved through a kind of psychological projection for which one can find many examples in the bureaucratic and

cameralist writings. Hull describes the way in which bureaucrats projected their own understanding of *permanent* ethical character onto peasants as they spoke in the voice of civil society. In contrast, the overwhelming majority of the population viewed sexual shame as fleeting and not necessarily a barrier to future marriage. In Fichte, then, we see not only the civil-social perspective itself but also a trace of its arising through the transferal of corporate meanings via the administrative institutions. This is clearest in his discussion of adultery, in which Fichte interprets the phenomenon of social disrespect as a moral vice.

Here the philosophical form of this transference is relevant: to take over the corporate meanings, they must first be described as *natural* rather than *traditional* or *social*.<sup>13</sup> We already saw this general form above in connection with Fichte's assertion that only through marriage do we move from nature to virtue. Of course, this step threatens Fichte's doctrine with heteronomy, but this threat is then the motivation for the development of very strict conditions for marital and familial right. Accordingly, for Fichte marriage, and hence the family in general, is "not an artificial custom or arbitrary arrangement, but is rather a relation in which the spouses' union is necessarily and completely determined by nature and reason" (GA 4, 105).

Though these natural and rational grounds come together in a conception of gender difference that is otherwise rather foreign to Fichte's thought, it is nonetheless important to understand the necessity of this appeal to gender difference. This necessity is just as much historical-political as logical: As the striving toward the new civil society brought the older corporate divisions into disrepute, there remained nonetheless a need for particular descriptions through which new laws could get a grip on society. Without the corporate differences, bodily differences between human beings emerge as the universal particulars, that is, as the species of the genus "citizen" that are regulated by law.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, Fichte's explicit use of the concept of an estate in his treatment of the family is the exception that proves the rule. Fichte holds marriages between spouses who come from different estates to be invalid (since the two spouses purportedly cannot share their lives completely), but there are only two estates for him: "one which cultivates [*ausbildet*] only its body for mechanical work, and one which eminently cultivates its mind" (GA4, 120). Here we have perhaps the best example of the circuit from corporate to civil society via the state: The concept of an estate is itself characterized by its indispensability for administration.

In order to build a bridge in the near future to the future proper, recourse to the recent past was necessary. Furthermore, this philosophical step from a traditional (Fichte: "*willkürhrlichen*") to a natural conception of marriage had a political function, since it provided a rationale for the replacement of the *Hausstand* through the nuclear family.<sup>15</sup>



## 2.2. Hegel

It is, of course, often remarked that Hegel is a representative of the state's perspective. But this remark is often combined with the failure to differentiate between state (*Staat*) and government (*Regierung*). Hegel is presented as the thinker of totality, in whose thought all social and personal differences are subsumed in the totality of the administrative state. Though, of course, Hegel does speak of the state as a totality (e.g., PR§256R), "the state (*der Staat*)" here means the entirety of politically articulated society; that is, he counts the family and civil society, as well as the government, as part of the state. This interpretation of Hegel as thinker of totality proceeds as if Hegel had not made any distinction between state and society or between state and estate; that is, it proceeds to read Hegel as an essentially premodern political thinker. In contrast to this misleading interpretation it is significant that Hegel both takes up the *governmental* perspective as one among many and saw clearly that the action of the government on society faces substantial resistance and can only be made effective by arduous effort.<sup>16</sup> The state as the normative whole of society is just the pattern of interactions between government and societies. There are many indications of this recognition in Hegel's discussion of the family in the *Philosophy of Right*.

We find the first indication in his *idea* of the family and in the general theoretical task that this idea is supposed to accomplish. The task at issue derives from the difficulty of administration and the need for an anchor point for the new laws in actual social institutions. This difficulty and the indispensability of social particularities are to be found in the chapter on Ethical Life:

The objective ethical order, which comes on the scene in place of good in the abstract, is substance made concrete by subjectivity as infinite form. Hence it posits within itself distinctions whose specific character is thereby determined by the concept, and which endow the ethical order with a stable content which is necessary for itself and whose existence is exalted above subjective opinion and caprice. These distinctions are laws and institutions that have being in and for themselves.

(GPR §144)

When one considers the family from the perspective of this necessity, one sees an institution that serves not one but many purposes:

If with a view to framing or criticizing legal determinations, the question is asked: what should be regarded as the chief end of marriage?, the question may be taken to mean: which single facet of marriage in its actuality is to be regarded as the most essential one? No one facet

by itself, however, makes up the whole range of its content in and for itself, i.e. of its ethical character, and one or other of its facets may be lacking in an existing marriage without detriment to the essence of marriage itself.

(GPR §164R)

Thus, we find in Hegel's rather mundane discussion not a univocal institution with a similarly singular main purpose but, rather, a complex and multipolar institution that provides different advantages, rights and duties for men, women and children and that must be integrated with civil society. As Hegel puts it, "[m]arriage contains . . . liveliness [*Lebendigkeit*] in its totality" (PR§161).

Clearly, Hegel's presentation of this institution must therefore find a number of equilibria between the different aspects of its liveliness. Here are two brief examples. First, Hegel notes in a handwritten remark (to PR§166) that the wife in the nuclear family (*Hausfrau*) is in a status between polygamy (in which each wife is disrespected) and chivalry (in which the wife enjoys a higher standing) (GW 14,2: 749). Polygamy was a common thought experiment of the cameralists and Enlightenment thinkers. It served to raise the question, whether and how given family structures could be modified in the new civil society.<sup>17</sup> The thought experiment is thus a measure for the distance to the horizon of expectations and at the same time a procedure by means of which the content of these expectations could be determined. In contrast, chivalry is a concept of corporate society and, in particular, one that magnifies the distance between corporate society and the present. The *Hausfrau* is Hegel's institutional solution to the problem of the social status of women, who no longer have any corporate duties and rights but nonetheless require a particular social position.

Second, Hegel considers the legal permission to divorce as a middle path between the excessive strictness of the Catholic Church's doctrine and the excessive laxity of Roman law (GW 14,2: 751). In contrast, the state must not only care for the stability of the institution (its "ethical substantiality") but also recognize the contingency of love (PR§176). Here we recognize the governmental perspective of administration, from which Hegel wants to maintain a corporate property of marriage in a civil-social context, even though, in large part, marriage is stamped by the civil-social expectations relating to love and property. At first it might appear that both poles of the opposition—Catholicism and Rome—lie in the past, but Hegel often uses Roman law as a thought experiment regarding the future, since it contained the formal conception of personhood and property that seemed also to define the central values of the future civil society. Here Roman divorce law plays a similar role to polygamy, as a historical example of a future possibility, or even as a "future past" in Reinhart Koselleck's sense. Both are relationships that

are characterized by formal universality (all wives play the same role equally), whereas the “pasts past” (chivalry and Catholicism) present images of traditional particularities. Between these past and far-future possibilities Hegel searches for that which now and in the near future can be politically and socially realized.<sup>18</sup>

### 2.3. Kant

In this historical perspective, perhaps the greatest surprise is the extent to which Kant’s understanding of the family remains rooted in corporate society. In fact, instead of a doctrine of the family he offers us a doctrine of the *Hausstand*. Here I will just point to three corporate characteristics from Kant’s discussion in the *Rechtslehre*.

The most clearly corporate element of Kant’s presentation of “[r]ights to persons akin to rights to things [Von dem auf dingliche Art persönlichen Recht]” is his concept of “domestic society [*häusslichen Gesellschaft*]” (AA 6:277) and more particularly his inclusion of servants in this society. In fact, Kant only speaks of the “family” in connection with servants (§§22 & 30). Neither Hegel nor Fichte even refers to servants, but for Kant they play a similar role to resources (*Vermögen*) for Hegel; that is, they make the inner economic activity and structure of the family visible. But what then comes into view is a peculiar economic society, an essentially “unequal society (of a commander or ruler and of those who obey, i.e., servants [*Dienerschaft*])” (6:283). In Kant, then, we find less economic continuity between the family and civil society than we do in Hegel, for whom the family resources have approximately the same structure as social resources.<sup>19</sup>

A second corporate characteristic of Kant’s concept of the family is the equality of rights and duties of husband and wife within marriage. Purported gender differences do not play the important role in Kant that they play in Fichte and, to a slightly lesser extent, in Hegel. Section 26 is naturally the clearest affirmation of this equality, and there is also the assertion that both spouses have the authority to maintain property outside the community property of the marriage. Fichte specifically denies the moral and legal permissibility of such a practice, even though in corporate society it was widespread.<sup>20</sup> Of course, Kant allows that the law may determine the father to be head of household in charge of advancing the common interests of the family. But when the wife has the opportunity to keep a part of her property separate from community property, then she would also have greater power in the determination of this common interest. The equal bargaining capacity and sexual activity of both genders correspond to a pre-civil, corporate society, in which wives had an essential and *public* economic role to play and in which it was presupposed that the sexual drives of both genders were roughly the same.<sup>21</sup>

A further and final corporate property of Kant's family we have already seen in Hegel, namely the absence of a fundamental purpose. The possibility of reproduction limits, of course, the allowed use of sexual organs, "but it is not requisite for the human being who marries to make this their end in order for this union to be compatible with rights" (6:277). Even further than for Hegel, for Kant the family is not a goal-directed institution but, rather, a pattern of permissible actions.<sup>22</sup> This follows directly out of the difference between right and virtue, but even in the *Tugendlehre* the goal-directedness of marriage is minimized.<sup>23</sup> In addition, Kant does not appear to be interested in the question of how the marriage and family should be integrated into the new civil society. He merely emphasizes that the actuality of marriage, family and servants shows that there is more to private law than rights to things and rights to persons (the two categories of the *Allgemeines Landrecht*), namely, a right to person akin to a right to things. This legal recognition of such a right is precisely the recognition of a kind of society, which in the civil-social sense is neither private nor public.

### §3. The Internal Field of Tension

The point of this section is to exemplify the following point, the conceptual grounding of which must wait until §4: What distinguishes political *philosophy* from politics *simpliciter* is the fact that political philosophers include (at least implicitly) all of these social perspectives in their conceptions of political relations and institutions, rather than simply advocating for the interests apparent to only one perspective and suppressing the other perspectives. In this way, the apparently contradictory nature of political philosophy is redeemed since those tensions express the genuine social reality at which such philosophy is aimed. At a certain level of generality this is, of course, a familiar Marxist point. But two points of divergence must be noted: First, the point here is to be detached from any sort of historical progressivism or determinism. What is historical about the target phenomenon of political philosophy is primarily the synchronic tension between temporal layers rather than diachronic change or advance. Second, the point is that each author is more than just the superstructural mouthpiece of a particular class but also inherently incorporates the perspectives of other classes as well (even if only implicitly). As I argue in §4, both of these divergences from a certain kind of Marxism follow from the thought that political philosophy must *conceptualize* social reality and the concomitant constraints on what counts as conceptualization. But since we have already seen the diversity of perspectives explicitly in Hegel in §2.2, and in the interests of space in a chapter that is supposed to be about *Hegel's* metaphysics and politics, I restrict the discussion here to Kant before saying just a bit more about Hegel.

### 3.1. Kant

To sketch the tension in Kant I focus on his discussion of private right, of which the discussion of the family is one part. More specifically, I will focus on the three sections within acquired right, namely, rights to things (property), rights to persons (contract) and rights to persons akin to rights to things (family). By way of justification of this focus let me just say that it is in some sense arbitrary. That is, the methodological perspective I am attempting to illuminate should generalize so that Kant's political philosophy as a whole, or Kant's doctrine of the family itself, could be understood as presenting these three perspectives to varying degrees (with the priority of the particular-corporate); this is part of what makes that method *metaphysical*. But my concern here is primarily to give a clear example of the method whose metaphysical nature will occupy us in the following section, and for that specific purpose a focus on acquired right will be helpful. Here I want to maintain that property rights to things represent the universal perspective, contract rights the individual perspective, and family right the particular perspective. Furthermore, I also want to maintain that the particular perspective is dominant over the other two even in the discussion of property and contract and, in fact, over right as a whole.

But first, the different perspectives. In what sense can one think of property as representing the universal perspective on private law? In three different senses: First, it is the only kind of acquisition that can be *original*—contract presupposes property rights (6:259 & 271). Second, the property right is private right *generalized*; that is, it is my right to the private use to a thing that is underwritten by “the united choice of all who possess it in common [*durch vereinigte Willkür Aller in einem Gesammtbesitz*]” (6:261). (This is true whether one is discussing provisional right in the state of nature or completed right in the civil condition.) Finally, property rights are the *collective form* of all private right: “the *sum* of all of the principles [*Inbegriff aller Gesetze*] having to do with things being mine or yours” (6:261).

It is a little more difficult to make out why contract represents the individual perspective on private law. In a technical, Hegelian sense, it is individual because it essentially involves the *connection* of *universal* property right and *particular* choice. That is, it produces a particular version of that common will that modifies the rights to specific objects. Furthermore, a contract is an individual perspective precisely because it requires *multiple individuals* who, in their reciprocal interaction with each other, clarify their specific rights and duties. Though sometimes Kant describes this in terms of causality (e.g., 6:259), it is actually closer to reciprocal interaction since it requires the consent of both the transferor and transferee and thus lacks the kind of asymmetrical power inherent in the notion of causation.

It is easiest to see why the right to family invokes the particular perspective. Since showing that was the burden of §2.3, I won't enter into more discussion of it here except to note that on Kant's view what I possess in my spouse, children and servants is their *status* (*Zustand*), and status is a suspicious category in political philosophy precisely because of the overwhelming particularity that is ordinarily associated with it. This is a feature of persons that is thing-like and provides a kind of middle term anchoring a continuum between the things that are the objects of property right and the persons that are the objects of contract right. But there is a further kind of particularity to Kant's more general approach to private law; namely, the particular perspective is dominant over the other two even in the discussion of property and contract. Since, as noted earlier, Kant claims that property is "the *sum* of all of the principles [*Inbegriff aller Gesetze*] having to do with things being mine or yours" (6:261), this priority of the particular must have a different form. Specifically, it has an *intuitive* rather than conceptual form, and here we can use the well-known recent interpretation of Kant's theory of law by Arthur Ripstein to orient our discussion.<sup>24</sup>

On Ripstein's view, the key difference between Kant's account morality and his account of right is that the former concerns freedom generally but the latter specifically *external* freedom, that is, the freedom of persons who must relate to each other in space.<sup>25</sup> Put slightly differently, what the Universal Principle of Right (UPR) adds to the Categorical Imperative (CI) it adds by appeal to the a priori intuition of space as a sphere of action and choice.

Space, as a form of intuition, necessarily has something particular about it. This is deeply ingrained in Kant's doctrine of intuition as such and its contrast with concepts (KrV A320/B376–7). Moreover, the particularity in the sense of singularity of space and time is essential to the arguments by which Kant tries to show that space and time are essentially intuitions rather than concepts (KrV A24–5/B39 and A31–2/B47).<sup>26</sup> But on Ripstein's view there is something even more particular about the way space is used in Kant's argument. Specifically, space and the way persons occupy it establish different kinds of *incompatibilities* that generate different kinds of rights.<sup>27</sup> The very notion of incompatibility—if this, then not that—is, of course, deeply particular. On Ripstein's view, the structure of right as a whole (and thus the difference between the CI and the UPR) is to be understood on analogy with the structure of private right with its different sorts of incompatibilities (between possession of objects, choices, and statuses). This not only means that acquired right is understood through the lens of particularity, and thus from the standpoint to which status appears as an essential kind of possession, but that the entirety of right is viewed from that particular perspective as well. What one then has is a family of different spatial incompatibilities all of which resemble each other and each of which is governed by a separate but analogous kind of right.

### 3.2. *Hegel*

In Hegel, we already saw the other perspectives in the balancing acts he tries to accomplish in his doctrine of the nuclear family. But the presence of multiple perspectives is perhaps most clearly to be seen in the overall structure of ethical life, with its division into family, civil society and state. Here it is quite clear that the family represents the particular perspective, civil society the universal and state (in the contrastive sense of government) the individual (PR§157). And it is clear that the government has a kind of priority for Hegel. In fact, the mistake mentioned at the beginning of §2.2, namely, of confusing the state for the government, has its root in this priority. For Hegel, it is the governmental perspective that most fully illuminates the familial and civil-social perspectives, and thus most clearly illuminates the whole (i.e., the state). But this illumination from perspectives is a primarily subjective phenomenon, which is why the objective vocabulary of part/whole or substance/accident is of such limited use here. One final point, then, is the following: Though Hegel's take on the family is an individual take (in the logical sense of "individual") in comparison with Fichte's and Kant's, the institution of the family represents the particular perspective within the state (i.e., as compared with civil society and government). Hegel offers us an individual take on the way that the particular, universal and individual institutions of the state hang together.

We have then, from this and the previous section, three main results. First, in each of the three authors' observations on the family one of the three perspectives is dominant: the particular/corporate in Kant, the universal/civil-social in Fichte and the individual/governmental in Hegel. Second, for each author, the other two perspectives are simultaneously present in a secondary form. And third, there is a different kind of secondary form in each of the three authors: In Fichte, the secondary perspectives appear as a kind of genetic trace of the transfer of the institution from corporate society via the state to civil society; in Hegel, as extremes between which a mean has to be found (i.e., as goals between which a balance must be found); and in Kant really only indirectly, that is, through similarity or analogy. I want to say just briefly here why these three results are connected to each other before diving into their common conceptual ground in the following section.

They are connected because there is no point outside of political reality from which to view the whole, which means that the whole can only be seen from inside. But inside the whole, there are only the three perspectives, and thus, there are three different views on the whole, or three different ways in which the interconnections that constitute the whole as whole can look to the observer. Each of these ways of relating the dominant to the other perspectives is characteristic of the field of vision formed from that perspective. The universal perspective sees the relations



essentially *causally*, and thus, they appear as genetic traces. The individual perspective sees them as *desiderata* to be balanced in the right way. And the particular perspective sees them as a *continuum of resemblances* so that the family is like a right to a thing (the universal aspect) but also like a contractual right (the individual aspect). The universal perspective is essentially rule-governed and exploits the common conceptual form of natural (causal) and practical laws, the individual perspective aims at realizing the most comprehensive good and the particular perspective works sideways, as it were, by a principle of analogy. As we will see in the following section, when understood in terms of the Hegelian idea, the universal/civil-social perspective is that of the theoretical idea, the individual/governmental is that of the practical idea and the particular/corporate is that of the idea as life.

#### §4. A Metaphysics of Interlocking Perspectives

In the foregoing, I mentioned three misunderstandings of the multipolar phenomenon to be avoided: first, the mistake of thinking that societies and governments are themselves institutions, when instead they are perspectives (§1.1); second, the mistake of thinking that meanings in the circuit are exclusively linguistic, when instead they are actual institutions (§1.2); and, third, the mistake of thinking that the circuit is a necessary progressive development, when, in fact, the circuit is as much synchronic as diachronic (§2). These mistakes and their remedies are all connected to a further point made (just briefly) about the consequences of conceptualization (§3), namely, that it is essentially multi-perspectival. The goal of this section is to briefly sketch the Hegelian metaphysics that supports the last point in such a way as to lead us away from the misunderstandings and towards their remedies.

The metaphysics at issue comes from Hegel's *Science of Logic* and, in particular, from the subjective logic. Since I have argued for this reading in more detail and with more attention to textual evidence elsewhere, I largely summarize it here.<sup>28</sup>

The first point is that Hegel's three basic conceptual moments—universality, particularity and individuality—are best understood as *perspectives rather than things*. They are neither kinds of objects nor even objective aspects of things but, rather (as one would expect from their defining role in Hegel's subjective logic), the basic taxonomy of kinds of takes on objects. At the very beginning of the subjective logic, Hegel argues for the priority of these subjective perspectives over the objective categories of the Doctrine of Essence precisely on the grounds that the three conceptual moments wear their interdependence on their face, whereas the interdependence of even the most sophisticated categories of essence is somehow concealed by their self-presentation. Thus, to understand the power of those subjective categories and their centrality



to Hegel's thinking, we have to understand the way that, as perspectives, they open up onto each other and thus each, successively, provides a take on the whole of which they are themselves the constituent parts.

A second point is that these perspectives have a historical valence as well. As we noted earlier, the social perspectives have a temporal form: the *true* corporate society always lies in the past, the *true* civil society in the (far) future and the *true* state in the (near) future. On my view, this pattern is to be found in the *Logic* as well: The concept presents the pure form of history and the idea the pure form of a historical object. Here it is helpful to use some terms from Koselleck, who conceives of historical experience as a field of tension (*Spannungsfeld*) of different temporal strata (*Zeitschichten*). These layers are temporal not primarily in the sense that they are experienced at different times or are expectations of events at different times but, rather, in the sense that they refer to different temporal scales. There are layers that are primarily about the *short-term* experience of surprising events, layers that are primarily about the *medium-term* accumulation of repeated experience over the course of the life span of a generation, and layers that are about *long-term* systems such as the Roman Empire or Christendom.<sup>29</sup> Hegel's conceptual perspectives—universality, particularity, and individuality—are temporal strata in this sense. Particularity is the perspective that registers the short-term, fine-grained surprises, individuality the perspective that registers the medium-term accumulation of repeated experiences, and universality the perspective that registers the long-term persistence of norms and laws that extend across generations, perhaps even to the point of strict universality and necessity.<sup>30</sup>

A third point is that these perspectives are something *to which something else appears*. Hegel's conceptual, subjective perspective is not intellectual intuition but, rather, real perspective. Yet it is also not perception of something extra-conceptual such as intuition or sensory content; something *seems some way* to a point of view, but the visibility is merely a metaphor. What the metaphor points to is the way in which not every part of an object can equally be in focus at once. On Hegel's view, the great advantage of the subjective perspectives over the objective categories is that nothing is hidden—everything appears within the field of vision. But within any field of vision only one point is in perfect focus, and it is surrounded first by what in photography is called the “circle of confusion” (the sphere in which points are really spots but small enough to allow us to imagine them as points) and, second, by what is out of focus but nonetheless present. One cannot take up the particular perspective, for example, without the universal and individual appearing as well. In contrast, Hegel thinks, one can think the actuality of an object without, say, necessarily thinking its possibility at the same time (which thus remains hidden, like the back side of a visual object). And yet even if the universal and individual appear in the particular's field of vision,

the universal remains blurry, and the individual can only be made out by stressing its similarity to the particular.

A fourth point is that the way things appear to perspectives as out of focus is in *objective guise*. That is, the objective categories retain their usefulness precisely as descriptions of the ways objects seem to a subjective perspective when that perspective simultaneously sees other aspects of the object as well. Put in terms of the visual metaphor, the objective categories describe those aspects of the object that are blurry—that are present in the presentation but insufficiently clear and distinct. Objective categories describe the background content of the image, if you like. But when employed in the context of subjective perspectives, that background content is present rather than implicit (which is the mode of existence of that non-thematized content in the Doctrine of Essence). It is not a matter of bringing it out or realizing it in *another* expression but of shifting perspective on the same content in order to bring into focus another facet of it. But from this other perspective, something that was previously in focus is now blurry or indistinct and is thus best described by means of the objective categories. There is no possible presentation in which all facets of the object are in perfect focus at the same time, which means that as we shift subjective perspectives around the circuit particular-individual-universal, the objective categories always have a role to play in describing what appears to that perspective. There are systematic ways that they play this role, which we will see in the next point.

A fifth point is that *even other subjective perspectives* appear to a further subjective perspective in objective guise. This is perhaps the most difficult point, and the one which most shows up the limitations of the visual metaphor. Hegel is adamant that once we come to the subjective logic, there can be no question of the relation of the concept to something extra-conceptual. But he is just as adamant that we still have seeming and appearing, especially in the culmination of the Logic in the Idea (WL 12.235, 29–33). Paradoxically, conceptuality appears to the concept in objective guise (12.199, 6 & 12.235, 33–38). What does this mean, and why should it be the case? The key is the plurality of conceptuality. Though Hegel often speaks of (and even emphasizes the importance of) *the* concept, this unitary designation includes an inherent plurality in the different conceptual moments of universality, particularity and individuality. None of the moments are superfluous or fully superseded by the others, and none of the moments are to be identified as *the* concept to the exclusion of the others. And yet each moment is tasked with presenting the whole, a task that is in some sense beyond its capacities and thus remains a mere “ought” (EL§160, WL 12.125). When you put all this together, it means that each conceptual moment is a view of the whole concept only as a perspective on the others. And this means that conceptuality in one sense, for example, particularity, must appear to conceptuality in another sense, for example, universality. When it does so, Hegel

says, the conceptual perspective is *für sich* from the subject position but *an sich* in the object position (12.199, 9–14; also 12.192). When it appears as *für sich* the conceptual perspective presents itself conceptually, that is, under the guise of one of the three conceptual moments. But when it presents itself *an sich* it presents itself in objective guise. Here primarily the objective categories of modality play this role: Universality appears as possibility, particularity as actuality and individuality as necessity.

This language of *für sich* and *an sich*, of course, harkens back to the Doctrine of Essence, but it must mean something slightly different here. In fact, it means something shockingly different. As Continental critics of Hegel have long pointed out, conceptuality is a kind of narcissism: Following on Kant, the concept (or reason) looks for a reflection of itself in its object. But what these critics have largely missed is the way that this feature is one among many features of conceptuality and is, in fact, harnessed by Hegel to tell a story about plurality. Here is how that story goes. Conceptuality looks for itself in the object, but this is underdescribed. In fact, conceptuality in one sense (e.g., universality) looks for itself in the object and, thus, has difficulty seeing the conceptuality of the object in the other senses (e.g., particularity and individuality), even when those conceptualities are staring it in the face, so to speak. Now, the subject-position conceptuality can perhaps make out one of the other conceptualities in the object if it looks closely (or squints? The metaphors certainly fail us here). But the third remains blurry, and logically speaking that means it remains in the guise of objectivity. For example, Hegel claims that the theoretical idea is a predominantly universal perspective, which manages to recognize the particularity in its objects (e.g., as a sensory manifold) but cannot bring its individuality into focus (which thus remains in the objective form of *necessity*). Individuality as such remains merely an ideal that is crucial to connecting universal and particular but is not to be identified with any object. (Here Hegel is certainly thinking of Kant [see KrV A567–8/B595–6 and A576/B604].) Similarly, the individual practical perspective can also make out the universality of moral rules but struggles to give meaning to the particularities of moral judgment that therefore appear objectively as brute actualities to be accommodated. Finally, the particular perspective of life can grasp individuals as self-organizing (i.e., subjective) functional wholes with given needs and drives, but the universal (the genus) can only be grasped as one of those given drives (the reproduction of the species is experienced as the sexual drive that ranges over multiple possible mates).

A sixth and final point is that the necessary blurriness of some part of the subjective field of vision entails the necessity for switching perspectives as a remedy. This is perhaps the most difficult point to see on the basis of this short summary, but it is, in fact, the heart of the normativity of Hegel's metaphysics. It is also difficult to see because Hegel tried to express the point by tracing the continual turning from one kind of

judgment to another and from one kind of syllogism to another. Since these forms of judgment and syllogism have become arcane, the best way to see this normative necessity of switching perspectives is at the level of the idea. To make a long story short, the three forms of the idea represent perspectives that each prioritize one of the conceptual moments: Life is predominantly particular, the theoretical idea predominantly universal, and the practical idea predominantly individual in orientation. What Hegel tries to show in the section on the idea is the way that each of the three requires the others for a full presentation of its own proper content. It is here that the normativity resides, and why that the normativity could equally well be understood as the spring that pushes the dialectic forward: What is normatively required is to take up the other viewpoints, which in Hegel's texts appears as the dialectical shifts from one category to another.

The normativity is essentially teleological (in the minimal sense of goal-directedness). On Hegel's view, theoretical and practical reason do not differ in that the latter is goal-directed and the former not. Instead, Hegel argues that in defining the goals that they attempt to achieve, theoretical reason adopts primarily the universal perspective whereas practical reason adopts the individual. At the highest level of generality, universal goal-directedness attempts to grasp the truth, and individual goal-directedness attempts to realize the good.<sup>31</sup> In contrast to these perspectives, life has a rather more fixed set of goals (e.g., reproduction) that have a tendency to operate behind the back of the perspective itself. Of course, this makes life a *limit case* of normativity, rather than its paradigm.<sup>32</sup> But across the levels of describing this viewpoint from the abstract (the particular) through the logically concrete (life) through the socially concrete (the corporate perspective), Hegel holds this to be the case. The goals of life, like the goals of the agricultural form of life, are so immediate and apparently fixed that they show up to that perspective less as goals to be set by agents and more as routines and habits. This is not to say that only life has habits; obviously, the theoretical and practical perspectives contain their own habits. It is simply that habits recede from view in the latter two perspectives but are front and center in the former.

We can say that the normativity derives from the recognition that others see something that we don't and yet are inherently trying to see (whether this other is a logical perspective, an individual agent, or a social group). The *ground* of normativity is our own partial blindness, and the *demand* of normativity is to avail ourselves of the extant repair strategies (again, whether logical, individual or social). A presupposition of this demand is a tractable number of perspectives, socially represented in visible ways—otherwise, the ought-implies-can principle is violated.<sup>33</sup> In the concluding section I want to return to Hegel's institution of the family and fill out the features and explain the normativity of the conception along these lines. The institution is to be interrogated according to whether it can serve

socially as such an objective presupposition for this demand of normativity, that is, whether in the institutions there are distinct relations of perspectives that enable and promote these repair strategies. This is what it means to investigate whether the institution “corresponds to its concept” in the Hegelians sense of “concept.”

## §5. Hegel on the Family

As mentioned already in §3.2, for Hegel family represents the particular perspective, civil society the universal and government the individual (PR§157). And for Hegel, it is the governmental perspective that most fully illuminates the familial and civil-social perspectives, and thus most clearly illuminates the whole (i.e., the state). Hegel’s take on the family is thus an individual take on the particular take on society as a whole that is represented in the family. We will say more about this meta-perspective in the following when we get to the failures of Hegel’s doctrine. For right now the important structure is that of the family from inside, as it were: The particular can see its own particularity reflected back to itself; it can squint to make out the individual but cannot see the universal as one of its own subjective organizing principles. I will quickly run through the institution in this order.

Marriage is the particular, or as Hegel often puts it, *immediate* side of the family (and so the immediate side of the immediate part of the state). It is the way that the apparent objectivity of the natural life process is made subjective, that is, self-conscious. This is the force of Hegel’s claims about the reduction of the sexual aspect of the marital relation to a natural and occasional drive with which one can identify in its proper context rather than feeling shame in the face of a necessitating natural impulse (EL§161–2).

This subjectivation takes place through the relation that particularity forms with individuality within the marriage: As the spouses join to form a single individual and share the entirety of their life, the sexual life that they share becomes one aspect among others rather than the defining feature. Part of the life that they share in Hegel’s version of the family is their children, and Hegel says that the parents love their own love in loving their children (EL§173). Though it is, of course, rather pedantic to put it this way, this is the particular perspective recognizing the individual perspective as belonging to its own subjectivity. Children give external existence to the family in a way that allows the spouses to see the individuality of their own love for each other.

Finally, the universal cannot really be made out but appears as a possibility. Once the *Stamm* or clan is stripped of its significance in favor of the new nuclear family, the universal appears as the external (i.e., objective) face of the family in its resources and property (EL§160). These resources and property really belong to another perspective, that is, to

that of civil society. In fact, in order to construct a universal perspective for the family, Hegel has to shade over from individual “substantial personality” in PR§169 to persistence and commonality (*ein Gemeinsames*; PR§170). But the content of that commonality remains entirely empty, and from the particular perspective of the family itself these resources remain essentially a sphere of possibilities of different kinds of work, property, and capital. The subjective side that is apparent from the civil-social perspective is here present only in its objective guise and thus as a contrast to the organizing subjectivity of the family. From the civil-social perspective on other institutions (markets, corporations, and industries), the subjective organizing principles of the family’s property can be made clear. But from the family’s own perspective Hegel has little to say about the disposition of these resources, except that the husband is responsible (PR§171) and children have a right to support and education out of those resources (PR§174). But the husband is responsible precisely because he is a member of the productive institutions *outside* the family in which the requisite subjective principles are to be located. In fact, Hegel makes the foreignness of the civil-social principle of formal universality to the family quite clear in his extensive criticism of Roman family law (PR§179R).

Of course, the main failing of Hegel’s analysis is the gender roles introduced, and the rationalization of a certain take on biology (EL§165–6). This is a logical failure on Hegel’s own terms and one that we should even expect for a view articulating the individual perspective on the family as an institution. The failure is twofold: First, in the absence of any direct access to the particular perspective, Hegel has the same recourse as Fichte to sex differences (i.e., to an objective conception of that particularity). Second, even granted the assumption of the social significance of natural sex, Hegel subverts the necessary repair strategies by defining the husband as head of household.

The metaphysics described here entails that every subject is not only in principle capable of taking up each of the conceptual perspectives, but that also in some sense they already do. To suggest, as Hegel does, that biological sex could have the rational significance of preventing different individuals from taking up different perspectives is impossible to square with this pluralistic doctrine.

The fundamental normative demand made by Hegel’s metaphysics on politics is, in fact, to magnify the visibility of these different perspectives and their ability to illuminate the public institutions shared by all citizens and to mitigate the inevitable distortion that is produced by such perspective. This is a commitment to the maintenance of this field of tension as both in tension and yet one field. Hegel’s insistence (in stronger terms than Kant) on a male head of household is a normative disaster even on his own assumptions because it institutionally discourages the reciprocal repair strategies of the spouses.

Hegel's doctrine of the family thus fails for similar reasons as Fichte's: In the absence of any meaningful recourse to the way the past informs the present of the family, Hegel appeals to biological sex to secure that end of the field of tension. The attachment cannot hold, however, precisely because the concomitant interpretation of gender roles is so radically new. Thus, there is some truth to the charge that in Hegel's state (as in reality), the family is essentially abandoned to economic institutions (even if quite against Hegel's own wishes). This then puts a great deal of pressure on the particular aspects of civil society (the estates and the corporations), a pressure that they cannot bear because their new status as primarily productive entities prioritizes the universal perspective and thus continually pulls them away from their role as "second family."

I offer one final note, just to register my opposition to a common feature of interpretations of Hegel's political philosophy that ground it in his metaphysics. Even if the metaphysics is externally fixed (something I deny), the question of what could play the institutional role of the presupposition of the demand of normativity is essentially open and context-bound. It is certainly Hegel's view that no just society can fail to have institutions that play this role and, thus, that such institutions can be defended as just along the metaphysical lines indicated here. But such justification is compatible with the possibility of other institutions that would play the role equally well. The nature of the justice (or right) that must be so realized is conceptually constrained by the possibility of justification, but the choice between such realizations may nonetheless be primarily a matter of politics.<sup>34</sup>

## Notes

- 1 *Begriffsgeschichten*. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2010), 12.
- 2 See my "Power as Control and the Therapeutic Effects of Hegel's Logic," *Hegel Bulletin*, vol. 36, no. 1 (2015): 33–52, and "Historical Subjectivity and Logical Pluralism," *Hegel Bulletin*, (forthcoming). A longer but still summary presentation of this view is below in §4.
- 3 I use *society* and *society itself* here as placeholders for describing corporate society, civil society and the state collectively. It is actually an entailment of the logical perspective taken up in this paper that there is no truly neutral conception of all three combined to be had; there are only three different substantive conceptions, that is, the collection of the three viewed sequentially from the perspective of each of the three. Though a crucial result for the overall project of which this chapter is a part, it introduces expository difficulties that are best left to the side here.
- 4 For a contrasting view of the meaning of *civil society* in this period, see Christof Dipper, "Übergangsgesellschaft: Die Ländliche Sozialordnung in Mitteleuropa Um 1800," *Zeitschrift Für Historische Forschung*, vol. 23, no. 1 (1996): 68.
- 5 *Sexuality, State, and Civil Society in Germany, 1700–1815*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 95.



- 6 Ibid., 92.
- 7 I have adopted the somewhat cumbersome neologism “civil-social” to describe this perspective, rather than the usual “bourgeois.” In my view, *bourgeois* has come to mean so many things that it is now unsuitable as a term of art to describe a particular social position. For similar reasons, I will use *governmental* to describe the perspective of the state, though in many respects, *administrative* might have served just as well.
- 8 The different authors writing on sexuality had the norms of *Sittlichkeit* in common, and these norms reflected governmental, corporate and civil-social interests. As a further twist, Hull points out that the unique social position of the supporters of the civil-social interests played a role in their observations, since many, if not most, of these writers and advocates were, in fact, government officials of one sort or another. Because of his corporate status as a civil servant, such an official could have a kind of family that would have been unimaginable for an innkeeper or farmer or guild master, and it was precisely this very particular and unusual kind of family that formed the universal image of the nuclear family that he then advocated for all (Hull, *Sexuality, State, and Civil Society in Germany, 1700–1815*, 183–84). More on this unique situation in which civil-social interests were represented and advanced by bureaucrats in the following §1.2.
- 9 Wolfgang Zorn, “Gesellschaft Und Staat Im Bayern Des Vormärz,” in Werner Conze (ed.), *Staat Und Gesellschaft Im Deutschen Vormärz*. (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1962), 141.
- 10 *Ordinary Prussians: Brandenburg Junkers and Villagers, 1500–1840*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
- 11 Reinhart Koselleck, “Die Auflösung des Hauses als ständischer Herrschaftseinheit,” in *Begriffsgeschichten*. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2010), 465–85.
- 12 This citation and the following from GA 4 come from the *Foundations*. Those from GA 5 come from the *System of Ethics*, where Fichte simply summarizes his understanding of marriage from the *Foundations*. English translations are from J. G. Fichte, *Foundations of Natural Right*, ed. Frederick Neuhouser and trans. Michael Baur. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) and Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *The System of Ethics*, eds. Daniel Breazeale and Guenter Zöller. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
- 13 See also his discussion of the importance of reproduction in the *System der Sittenlehre*, GA 5, 287–8. In his *Philosophy of Right* Hegel saw this step and its meaning clearly but did not manage to present this insight very clearly. See my *The Expansion of Autonomy: Hegel’s Pluralistic Philosophy of Action*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), sec. 5.1.
- 14 Hull, *Sexuality, State, and Civil Society in Germany, 1700–1815*, 5.
- 15 However, the Prussian legal reforms did not succeed in replacing the *Hausstand* with the family by means of the *Allgemeines Landrecht* and in this respect Prussia was in no way an outlier in Germany. See Reinhart Koselleck, *Preussen Zwischen Reform Und Revolution: Allgemeines Landrecht, Verwaltung Und Soziale Bewegung von 1791 Bis 1848*. (Stuttgart: Klett, 1967), 69–70.
- 16 Above all, we must avoid the Whiggish history according to which the new civil society represented progressive interests against the reactionary state and nobility.
- 17 Hull, *Sexuality, State, and Civil Society in Germany, 1700–1815*, 176–79.
- 18 For a recent interpretation of Hegel’s theory of the family that also emphasizes its attempt to find a middle way between extremes, see Rahel Jaeggi, *Kritik von Lebensformen*. (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2013), sec. 4.3.



- 19 The significance of servants in Kant is not archaic since at the time of the publication of the *Rechtslehre* roughly one-seventh of the Prussian population consisted of servants. Koselleck, *Preussen Zwischen Reform Und Revolution*, 133.
- 20 Hegel allows the practice but in a somewhat more subordinate role (i.e., as really prospective decisions about how to distribute property upon the dissolution of the family). See PR§172R.
- 21 Hull, *Sexuality, State, and Civil Society in Germany, 1700–1815*, chap. 3.
- 22 In many sociological definitions of *institution* these two sides (goal-directedness and a pattern of norms) are brought together, but Kant's corporate separation of the two reveals the distinctively modern expectations that such definitions contain.
- 23 There Kant is prompted to consider the casuistically question whether "without consideration" for the goal of reproduction one is nonetheless allowed to have sexual intercourse, and proposes a "permissive law of moral practical reason" (AA VI, 426).
- 24 Arthur Ripstein, *Force and Freedom: Kant's Legal and Political Philosophy*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).
- 25 *Ibid.*, 358.
- 26 This piece of evidence is admittedly less probative than the pieces before and after it, since in those passages one might also understand Kant to be appealing to the *individuality* of space or time, in Hegel's sense.
- 27 *Force and Freedom*, 366.
- 28 Yeomans, "Power as Control and the Therapeutic Effects of Hegel's Logic" and Yeomans, "Historical Subjectivity and Logical Pluralism".
- 29 Reinhart Koselleck, *Zeitschichten: Studien zur Historik*. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2003), 34–41.
- 30 Strictly speaking, one should say that the Hegelian perspectives embody different *scales of variation* rather than *temporal scales* (since there is officially no time in the Logic), but this is a complication from which we can safely abstract here. For more discussion of this point see Yeomans, "Historical Subjectivity and Logical Pluralism," sec. 4.
- 31 Thus, it does turn out that practical reason has the conative direction of fit (objectivity should adjust to subjectivity) rather than the cognitive (subjectivity should adjust to objectivity), but this is a consequence of the difference in conceptual orientation.
- 32 From Hegel's logical perspective, life is a limit case because in talking of normativity we take up the practical (individual) perspective, and that perspective can come to see the universal (i.e., it can come to see the lawlike aspects of normativity) but struggles and generally fails to clarify the particular features such as habits and drives (on the one subjective side) and preconditions and consequences (on the objective).
- 33 On this notion of a tractable plurality, see my "The One and the Many in the Philosophy of Action," in Vivasvan Soni and Thomas Pfau (eds.), *Judgment & Action: New Interdisciplinary Essays*. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, forthcoming).
- 34 This essay was written while on a sabbatical leave from Purdue University generously funded by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, and was presented to audiences in Münster, Dresden and Munich. The author would like to thank Günter Zöller, Ansgar Lyssy, Amir Mohseni, Dagmar Ellerbrock, Manuel Bastias, Cristiana Senigaglia, Simon Derppmann, Nadine Mooren and Thomas Meyer for valuable feedback on earlier versions of the paper.

# 10 Hegel's Metaphysics of Marriage

## Teleology, Ontology and Sexually Embodied Freedom in the *Philosophy of Right's* Account of the Family

Joshua D. Goldstein

### Introduction

As is well known, one of the central claims of Hegel's political philosophy is that ancient world is to be distinguished from the world of fully actualized freedom that belongs to European modernity. For Hegel, a teleological and ontological gulf separates the ancient Greek world—with its concern for meaning that resides in and as the objective, external and given nature of the *kosmos*—from the modern world in which subjectivity receives its recognition, respect and integration into ethical life (e.g., *PR* § 260; see also §§ 46, 185 & Z, 206 and 262A & Z).<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, Hegel shares with ancient philosophers the idea that the experience of a deep and unique bond between two individuals—for example, the experience that the Greeks identified variously with *erōs*, *aphrodisia*, *philia*, and life within the *oikos*—constitutes at least one of modernity's foundationally possibilities for human fulfillment.<sup>2</sup>

Unlike the Greeks, Hegel forges the connection between love, sex, friendship, marriage and family (on one side) and human completion (on the other) through the language of *freedom*. The family, properly grasped belongs to that system of “the *Idea of freedom* as the living good” (*PR* § 142)—that is, ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*)—which any modern state must institutionally secure and support. At the core of the family lies the activating place for subjectivity: the individual choice and experience of *marriage*. This marital experience and its self-conscious way of life belong to freedom, to being what we are, or, in Hegel's turn of phrase, to being “at home in the world” (*PR* §§ 4Z [p. 36]; 187A). In sum, Hegel's promise within his practical philosophy is to show us how to recognize “marriage as an ethical act of freedom” (*PR* § 168). In this way, he promises to give us a metaphysics of marriage that rivals in ambition (if not lyricism) the ancient Greek attempts to integrate love, sex, friendship and family into an account of the good life.

In this chapter, I explore Hegel's attempt to fulfill this promise and the difficulty that he has in doing so. This difficulty, I argue, shows itself in an account of the family that interweaves two distinct attempts at metaphysically grounding marriage in freedom. The first and most visible of his metaphysical accounts, I call teleological. I show how the latter comes to involve an atavistic return to and refuge in an Aristotelian naturalism, not, however, a naturalism in Terry Pinkard's broader and interpretatively accurate sense that Hegel employs an account of what humans are (as self-constituting beings)<sup>3</sup> but, rather, a naturalism that turns to the structure of our organically embodied existence to draw, anchor and defend the boundaries of marriage and bind it to the living good of freedom. In this refuge in an atavistic Aristotelian naturalism, marriage becomes a propaedeutic for freedom—a *preparatory* moment in a *teleology* of freedom—not the fulfillment of the promise of freedom itself.

This teleological account fails, I argue, because of its inability to live up to the demands of ethicality captured in a parallel account Hegel introduces. This parallel account focuses on the *ontology* of freedom as a new possibility of grounding the ethicality of marriage. Yet, in the collision between teleology and ontology, neither of these metaphysical accounts emerges as victorious within Hegel's practical philosophy. Rather, we are faced with two inadequate answers. To choose the teleological account preserves the boundaries and recognizable shape of marriage, love and sex. However, it does so only by making marriage ethically immature and inadequate to freedom. To choose the ontological account is to have marriage be adequate to freedom, yet at the cost of being so radically denatured and removed from a shared life, love and sex that it is no longer recognizably "marriage."

On the face of it, then, there is no coherent metaphysical account of marriage as freedom to be simply read-out of Hegel's political philosophy. Nonetheless, I argue, that these problems do not require that we *abandon* his grand promise to metaphysically bind marriage to human fulfillment.

Instead, Hegel's vacillation between teleology and ontology is, *for us*, an opportunity to think on a more Hegelian basis his metaphysics of marriage. I do so in this chapter by bringing out a feature implicit in his account of freedom. As Italo Testa puts it more generally, spirit (*Geist*) as the point of departure for freedom, "requires, in fact, that Spirit have its manifestations in corporeal expressivity. . . . Spirit will have to be embodied both in the organic body of individuals and in the inorganic body of institutions."<sup>4</sup> Yet, what we are exploring here is not this general requirement but the specific demands that *marriage as freedom* make on the unique shape of such embodiment. In other words, I am interested in a specifically *marital* embodied freedom, one in which the marital

possibilities of freedom both intrinsically *invoke* the sexuate body and, in securing this embodied freedom, generate the institutional boundaries and way of life in a way that neither Hegel's teleological nor his ontological accounts themselves can.

My recovery of a properly Hegelian metaphysics of marriage as freedom unfolds in three sections. Section I, teases out one thread in Hegel's metaphysics of marriage, what I am calling a teleological attempt to bind marriage to freedom. Here, I show how this thread ends up adopting an atavistic Aristotelian naturalism. Section II turns to the second of Hegel's metaphysical threads, what I call his ontological account. I show how it radically de-natures and overturns the teleological ground of marriage as an ethical act. Yet, in this confrontation between teleology and ontology, we encounter not a metaphysical solution to the ethics of marriage, but a deep puzzle: How to secure the promise not of marriage alone or ethicality alone, but marriage as an ethical act of freedom? In section III, I develop this solution through a recovery of an idea of the perfection of marital freedom in, and through, sexual embodiment. This new, Hegelian metaphysics of marriage gives us marriage that is neither naturalistic and ethically immature (the teleological account) nor dispositional and empty (the ontological one) but, rather, one radically open to lived possibility of embodied freedom. Through it, we have a way to think marriage as an ethical act of freedom within Hegel's practical philosophy.

## I. Hegel's Atavistic Aristotelianism: Naturalism and Teleology

### A. *Aristotle's Teleological Solution to the Family and Good Life*

Hegel's great ethical claim is that the "beauty and truth" of the Greek ethics of "substance" has found its completion in modern political life in the European West. Undergirding this claim, and animating Hegel's own political philosophy, is the idea that now "everything turns on grasping and expressing the True, not as *Substance*, but equally as *Subject*" (*PhG* ¶ 17).<sup>5</sup> In the *Philosophy of Right* and the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the two shining articulations of this older ethics of substance are Plato's *Republic* (e.g., *PR* § 185A) and Sophocles's *Antigone* (*PhG* ch. 6). The significance of these works, for Hegel, is the way in which the family becomes, not just a site of dramatic action but the living actualization of this ethics of substance. That is, the family in each of these works becomes *kosmos*: the underlying beautiful order made present as a system of self-comprehension and institutions. In contrast, Hegel's practical philosophy adopts a different metaphysics. Modern ethical life consists of, instead, an institutional order—that "objective sphere of ethics"—in which "substance [is] made *concrete* by subjectivity" (*PR* § 144; see also

§§ 152, 187A, 260–61). Yet, within Hegel's account of the fully modern, ethical community his account of the modern family, seems still in thrall of "the great *substantial* truth" (PR § 185A) of Greek ethics. Rather than an obvious return to a Platonic or Sophoclean expansion of the family to the *kosmos*, Hegel provides a seemingly more modest account of the modern family, one rooted, I argue, in an Aristotelian naturalism. Its shape, however, is not, as Pinkard suggests, that "reargued, rearranged, and reinterpreted" account of "Greek ideas" or a "disenchanted Aristotelian naturalism" in which "Aristotle's own system—with its substantialist and essentialist metaphysics[—is] transform[ed]."<sup>6</sup> Rather, Hegel takes refuge in an *unreconstructed* Aristotelian, naturalist attempt to anchor the family to the metaphysical good of freedom.

The problem that Aristotle faces in his account of the family is the seeming gap between the demands of this beautiful unity of ancient ethical life and the shape of the good life. For, on one hand, this unity requires that every dimension of the human *psuchē*—its biological, affective and rational capacities—have their place within the order of nature and, therefore, be adequately responded to. And, on the other hand, searching reflection on the good life that our nature *most requires* of us—however we want to settle the Aristotelian dispute between the contemplative or practical life—shows that the good life cannot be *actualized* in, through or as our merely bodily dimension. What complete life activity, *eudaimonia*, demands and what this beautiful unity demands are not one. Aristotle's practical response to this gap between unity and *eudaimonia* opened up by his naturalism, is to cabin the different dimensions of the human being into discrete institutions or "partnerships" (*koinōniai*), each of which responds wholly to the demands of its given dimension. So the biological facticity of reproduction makes us "male and female,"<sup>7</sup> but the *ethical* response to organic facticity, in general, is a partnership that provides a system of *identities* organized around organic life (e.g., master, slave, husband, wife, father and children), each which is defined by obligations that can be known and purposive activities that can be carried out.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, the *oikos* stands within a larger institution (the *polis*) that secures this cabining while, nonetheless, integrating this discrete institution and its system of identities into a still more encompassing system: the political partnership.

For Aristotle, the *polis*—as the total system of associations—responds to the given demands of the *psuchē* no less than the family does. Aristotle's famous declaration of the *polis* being natural to us explicitly indexes our very "whatness" (*ousia*) so that we simply would not be what we are—human—if we did not, "by nature" need the *polis*. We would be some other being, a god or an animal.<sup>9</sup> In preserving the family within the *polis*, Aristotle signals the way in which we must be able to find our way from the *psuchē*'s biological demands to its fullest eudaemonic ones. Here, teleology is not just a methodology for Aristotle (e.g., "Now in

these matters as elsewhere it is by looking at how things develop naturally from the beginning that one may best study them”),<sup>10</sup> one that is adopted by Hegel as well (e.g., “to develop the *Idea* . . . out of the concept; or what comes to the same thing, . . . [to] observe the proper immanent development of the thing itself”; *PR* § 2). Rather, the teleological connection between *polis* and *oikos*—such the *polis* is prior in *being* to the family although not prior in *time*—constitutes the possibility of the good life for us. The biological dimension of what we are is inadequate to the eudaemonic life as the beings that we are, and so the rightful accommodation and response to this dimension cannot block our participation in the good life. By conceptualizing the *oikos* as one stage in a developmental movement that culminates in institutions and activities that are both distant from and more complete than the family, Aristotle’s teleology bridges the otherwise competing demands of the human *psuchē*. In this way, his teleological connection between family and the good life satisfies *both* his naturalism (e.g., each dimension of the human being receives its due) *and* the exclusive conception of the good life as implicating the rational dimensions of the soul (e.g., the acts of political rulership, acts of contemplation).

Here, then, we can discern three aspects of Aristotle’s ethical naturalism present in his account of the family: (1) given biological facts (the drive to reproduce; the material demands of the body), (2) the teleological evaluation of the latter’s *ultimate* ethical significance by tracing its place in the unfolding of some more complete condition (e.g., the polis and political life; divine mind and human contemplation) and, nonetheless, (3) an appreciation of the unique ethical good of the family as involving an ethical *disposition* (e.g., an orientation to that system of familial identities) that makes sense of the choice-worthiness of our intrinsic biological givenness.

As Pinkard has rightly seen, Hegel reconfigures this Aristotelian naturalism within his practical philosophy *as a whole*. Indeed, the impossibility of this naturalism as Hegelianism is signaled by Hegel’s shift from a good life understood in terms of our given whatness or substance (*ousia*) to one that focuses instead on uncovering the concrete possibilities of the “infinitely subjective substantiality of ethical life” (*PR* § 187A). In general, then, Hegel can replace the Aristotelian eudaemonic life with that unique, participatory relationship in which we are—and know ourselves to be—“at home” in the world—that is, “freedom”:

[T]he *Idea of freedom* [is] the living good which has its knowledge and volition in self-consciousness, and its actuality through self-conscious action. Similarly, it is in ethical being that self-consciousness has its motivating end and a foundation which has being in and for itself. Ethical life is accordingly the *concept of freedom which*

*has become the existing [vorhandenen] world and the nature of self-consciousness.*

(PR § 142)

Hegel's political philosophy places the family within ethical life, and thus, within the very system in which the possibilities of being at home in the world are present. Yet, his own attempt to account for the ethical significance of the family—such that marriage can rightly be conceptualized “as an ethical act of freedom” (PR § 168)—implicitly takes refuge in the *structure* of Aristotle's ethically naturalistic account of the family rather than in the structure of freedom itself. I suggest that this refuge takes two interconnected forms: (1) the articulation of the ethical concreteness, differentiations and unity of the family in the Hegelian language of language of givenness or “immediacy” in a way that amounts to the adoption of the biological aspect of Aristotelian naturalism (explored in section I.B) and (2) a simultaneous awareness that a mere responsiveness to this natural immediacy is insufficient to account for the family's free relationship to the good life that then takes the Aristotelian form of a teleological presentation of the family's (now-subordinate) ethical significance (explored in section I.C). As we will see in section II, Aristotle's emphasis on disposition is adopted by Hegel as marital ethical *habit*, even as it collides with Hegel's own account of the ontology of freedom.

### ***B. Hegel's Account of the Family as Ethical Response to Biological Naturalism***

Hegel's practical philosophy never ceases to frame the family's significance in terms of *spirit*, whether it be in the characterization of ethical life in the *Phenomenology of Mind* or in the *Philosophy of Right*. In doing so, Hegel indicates his unwavering aspiration to fit the family within the demands of the total system of freedom. At the same time, his most salient characterization of the family identifies its ethicality with “immediate substantiality” (e.g., PR §§ 158, 180A [p. 217])—that is, the merely *given* content of our existence. In particular, Hegel focuses on the given shape of our bodies' sexual organization as well as feeling taken as “an *immediately* present content: these are the *drives, desires, and inclinations* by which the will finds itself naturally determined” or the “*immediate or natural will*” (PR § 11).

As with Aristotle, we can find in Hegel the family as the institutional response that is uniquely receptive to, sustaining of, and cabining of this complex of affective and sexual givenness. In his language of spirit as the living shape of the ethical system, he expresses it as follows:

The *one* [sex] is therefore spirituality which divides itself up into . . . the self-consciousness of conceptual thought and the volition of the



objective and ultimate end. And the *other* is spirituality which maintains itself in unity as knowledge and volition of the substantial in the form of concrete [atomistic] *individuality* [*Einzelheit*] and *feeling*. . . . Man therefore has his actual substantial life in the state[; . . . w]oman, however, has her substantial vocation in the family. (PR § 166)

The family's ethicality is grounded in the deeper significance present in sexual differentiation. The seemingly conventional roles of "husband" and "wife"—with Hegel playing on the unity of natural facticity (sexual differentiation) and ethicality (social role and recognition) present in the German *Mann und Frau*—are nothing but the rational shape of freedom's responsiveness to nature. This naturalistic structure of the ethical is continued in Hegel's treatment of the child's special significance as one moment of marriage's actualization. This significance has two merely given sources: the organic provenance of the child in the parent's sexual acts and the physical unity of the child's body:

The unity of marriage, which in substance is merely *inwardness* and *disposition* but in existence is divided between the two subjects [i.e., husband and wife], *itself* becomes in the children *an existence which has being for itself*, and an *object* which they love as their love and their substantial existence.

(PR § 173)

Taken together, this natural sexual differentiation, immediacy of feeling and organic unity of the child as the actualization of marriage constitutes the first moment of atavistic Aristotelianism. With it, Hegel slips from grasping marriage's ethical significance as the *reconfiguration* and *reinterpretation* of our biological and affective givenness to merely *describing* this nature and, in that description, locates it as ethically significant. Although Hegel's parallel ontological account will actively work to negate and transform this naturalism (see in section II), here the inverse occurs. Our givenness is not being robbed of its power, even though Hegel identifies this robbing with the very form of modern ethicality itself, as when he writes that the fully ethical is "an absolute authority and power, infinitely more firmly based than the being of nature[—e.g., t]he sun, moon, mountains, rivers, and all natural objects" (PR §146 & A). Instead, in this unity of family and given nature that Hegel develops here, nature itself continually robs the family of its ethicality.

We see this power of "natural objects" over the presence of the ethical most clearly in Hegel's sketch of the ethical death of the family, whose central feature is its inability to endure in its ethicality beyond the existence of the natural immediacies that uniquely constitute it.

For Hegel, there is a twofold ethical collapse of the family. As we know, within this Aristotelianism, the family's ethicality is actualized in children as that living shape of substance without subjectivity. Of course, the nature of children is that they cease to be this substantial unity—for example, by “raising the children out of the natural immediacy in which they originally exist to self-sufficiency and freedom of personality”. So, for Hegel, with this coming adulthood, not only do the children “leave the natural unit of the family” but this emergence also constitutes “[t]he ethical dissolution of the family” (PR § 175). The latter is the first way in which the *telos* of natural substantiality is the death of the ethicality of the family. The second concerns marriage. Since “[m]arriage is still only the immediate ethical Idea and thus has its objective actuality in the inwardness of subjective disposition and feeling”, the loss of this emotional immediacy is also the loss of marriage itself (PR § 176). Divorce is to be permitted, not as a *practical matter* arising from that miserableness possible within married life which John Milton captures so vividly.<sup>11</sup> It must be permitted as a *metaphysical matter* (see PR §§ 163Z, 176, 180A [p. 217]). Once natural immediacy (as feeling) is a dimension of marriage's ethicality, divorce is the recognition that marriage's *ethicality* has no being beyond its *immediacy*. The possibilities of divorce limn the endurance of marriage's natural ethical substance.

Insofar as the ethical is not simply the empty thought of freedom, for Hegel, it must have a concrete existence in the world: The fullness of freedom occurs only through “the living good” (PR § 142). Yet, that shape of the living good as immediate substantiality which Hegel weaves in the *Philosophy of Right* seems to better fit his account of the family provided in the *Phenomenology of Mind*, where the family constitutes the first, *premodern* moment of “ethical life”. Indeed, the endurance in the *Philosophy of Right* of the characterization of the family as the interpenetration of ethicality and immediacy stands in an uneasy tension with this work's metaphysics of *modern freedom* with its “right of *subjective freedom* . . . [as] the pivotal and focal point in the difference between *antiquity* and the *modern age*” (PR § 124A). Of course, Hegel's general ethical turn away from substantive ethics is, nonetheless, not a turn to subjectivity *simply*. Modernity's full ethical maturity also requires leaving behind untethered subjectivity's “ethical barbarism and . . . crude arbitrariness” (PR § 359). As Hegel's claim goes, modernity, when it “has gone through its formative process and attained its completed state” (PR Preface, 23), requires of freedom *subjective substantiality*. In this way, Hegel's portrayal of the family—with its ethical being in the immediate naturalism of sexual differentiation, the child's physical unity and immediate emotional experience certainly—counters the danger which he perceives in the romantic recasting of marriage or the emotional manipulation of some Lothario (PR § 164Z). Yet, blocking this one danger to freedom in the family, the

immediate substantiality of the family equally causes it to fall short of the demands of a fully matured freedom.

The gap between the immediate substantiality of the family and the ethical subjective substantiality of modern freedom requires a solution. I argue that Hegel attempts to forge one *within* this Aristotelian naturalism. He does so in the same way as Aristotle: through a *teleological* bridge between the family and civil society and the state, taking these last two as increasingly more ethically complete, although distant, shapes of freedom.

### C. *The Family as Teleologically Subordinate to Freedom*

We can think of teleology as simply intrinsic to Hegel's thought such that the truth which he attempts to communicate cannot stand without it. Here, though, we must distinguish, on one hand, Hegel's *teleological presentation* of this truth from that truth in its fully developed, stable living shape and experience. The former belongs to that process of education which we the reader (and, sometimes, we the participant in the drama) engage in in order to arrive at the standpoint of the truth. The latter is not lived or experienced as intrinsically teleological, i.e., as having a dynamic that *intrinsically* takes its participants away from both that lived experience and the conditions for its existence. So, Hegel can say at the beginning of the *Philosophy of Right* that "[t]he science of right is a part of philosophy . . . [and] therefore . . . it must observe the proper imminent development of the thing itself" (PR § 2). Yet, in the same paragraph he can add that once this development has been demonstrated, its existence "is to be taken as *given*" and therefore stable and non-teleological. Moreover, even within his teleological presentation, we can further distinguish that account of the family that fulfills the goals of demonstrating the development of the whole system of ethicality *for the reader* from another use of teleology, one intended to *preserve* the family as a stable, living institution *within* the ethical system, taking both the family and the ethical system now "as *given*."

When Hegel frames the family in the *Philosophy of Right* as ethical life's first developmental stage, both uses of teleology comes together: What demonstrates the development of the ethical system for the reader simultaneously becomes an attempt to preserve the family's natural ethicality within the system of modern freedom. Why is such a preservation necessary? In taking the family as immediate substantiality, the family becomes simply inadequate to the fully developed system of mediated subjective substantiality. Hegel's solution to this problem is to give a new dynamic to his familial naturalism. This dynamic takes the shape, not just of an educational teleology for the reader but also of a *propaedeutical* one within and towards the system of freedom itself. That is, the family becomes a starting point in the family member's own *learning to be*

*released from nature* and thus prepared for a more distant, fully modern freedom within the system itself.

Now, the shape of this education to freedom within the family is rather more limited than the one that Aristotle's own teleology of the family permits. In the *oikos*, the father/husband ought to govern his wife and children in an analogue to political rule.<sup>12</sup> In doing so, he gains that experience in exercising those capacities of the soul directly required for the active life. For Hegel, though, such a direct exercise of capacities required for the experience of ethicality in the rest of the system of freedom is not possible. For, what is *generally* required of us *outside* the family is a life that is "powerful and active," not "passive and subjective," one involving "work and struggle with the external world and with himself," not "a more peaceful unfolding whose principle is the more indeterminate unity of feeling" (PR § 166 & Z). Furthermore, what is *specifically* required for the achievement of this wider experience of ethicality is not this or that "acquisition of knowledge" or "technical exertion" (PR § 166Z) (i.e., not the exercise of capacity at all) but a distinct self-consciousness unique to each ethical sphere. For this reason Hegel emphasizes the radical incompatibility of the ethical being *within* the family and the ethical being *outside* of it. Thus, within his naturalistic account, man is made for nonfamilial life and when within the family can only have "a *peaceful intuition* [rather than the actuality] of this unity, and [therefore, only] an emotive and subjective ethical life" (PR § 166; emphasis added); woman is made for familial life and when without the family can only imperil the state, "for their actions are not based on the demands of universality but on contingent inclination and opinion" (PR § 166Z).

The problem here is not Hegel's sexism; it is the ethical requirements of familial life itself. The family is both a natural moment of freedom requiring stability and endurance but also inadequate to freedom and so requiring a movement away from it. Since the Aristotelian solution of mirroring and training for the wider ethical world—through the exercise of the rational capacities within the family—is excluded by Hegel's own naturalism, the institution of the family becomes a propaedeutic to freedom: A teleological movement that simultaneously preserves the family and yet prepares (some) of its members for an ethical life outside of it.

The scope of an education to freedom within the family is limited to that feature of modern freedom shared across all ethical ways of being. Since modern freedom requires a relationship of subjective substantiality and all humans begin entrained in nature (PR § 174), the family, ironically becomes connected to the end of freedom as the place *where we learn to overcome the natural*—the latter now grasped and presented as *fetter* to freedom. Thus, the family in its naturalism is where neither freedom is practiced (in miniature) nor the natural is to be celebrated. Taken teleologically, the family's naturalism shows its ethicality only the practical preparation for freedom found elsewhere.

Moreover, taken teleologically as the permanent, first moment of an education to freedom, we can make sense of Hegel's emphasis on the relentless and unavoidable movement towards the family's ethical dissolution—an *internally dissolving* movement not present in his discussion of civil society or the state. We see this end point of ethical dissolution in Hegel's characterization the family as a *natural process of development* (PR § 159), the way that children are *freedom* entrained in nature (PR § 174), the requirement that the family (and not just public education) break the sensuous and the natural within the child (PR §§ 175, 174Z) and the way that the achievement of the child's free personality constitutes the ethical destruction of the family (PR § 177). In this teleological account, the family's educative *telos* is the unlearning of the natural. (We can now make sense of Hegel's distinguishing between the family's ethical dissolution and its natural one that occurs with the parent's death, for the parents may die before or after the ethical end is completed [PR § 178].)

If the family were only to be this naturalism and this teleological education, Hegel's metaphysics of the family would not yet be a true metaphysics of the family *as freedom*. Within his practical philosophy, the family would not deserve to stand within the section of the "living good"—ethical life—any more than the sections on "Abstract Right" and "Morality" would. For there is nothing in the family that *itself* secures freedom as opposed to secures the bodily and emotional *starting point* for an education to a distant freedom. Yet, Hegel's placement of the family, with marriage at its core, within modern *Sittlichkeit* is rooted not just in some unfulfilled aspiration for the family, but in another metaphysics of the family. This second and parallel metaphysics of the family is rooted in the *ontology of freedom*, not the naturalistic-teleological propaedeutic for fully actualized freedom we have teased out here.

## II. Teleology Meets Ontology in the Habit of Freedom

For Aristotle, our participation in a partnership or *koinōnia* is morally definitive only when we are aware of and animated by its unique good. Thus, his concern, for example, with not confusing the *oikos* with the *polis* or ruling over the wife and children as if they were slaves. Hegel's own account of freedom as the living good gives a foundational place to just this sort of participation. As with Aristotle's *Politics* compared to his *Nicomachean Ethics*, the emphasis within Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* is on the institutional conditions in, through and as which participation in the good for human beings can occur in the world present before us—for example, "to comprehend and portray the state as an inherently rational entity" (PR Preface, 21) or "to consider not only what is the best constitution but also what is the one possible of achievement, and likewise also what is the one that is easier and more generally shared by all states."<sup>13</sup>

Although the *Philosophy of Right* seems to focus exclusively on detailing this system of institutions, his very metaphysics of freedom requires that the truth of ethical life exist as a *dispositional experience* of subjective-substantiality such that “*ethical substantiality* has attained its *right*” while ethical subjectivity has attained its “*validity*” (PR § 152). Developed over six paragraphs, Hegel’s account of this dispositional experience of freedom culminates in a dense formulation:

But if it is simply identical with the actuality of individuals, the ethical, as their general mode of behaviour, appears as custom; and the habit of the ethical appears as a second nature which takes the place of the original and purely natural will and is the all pervading soul, significance, and actuality of individual existence.

(PR § 151)

Earlier, and in §§ 152–4 that follow, Hegel attempts to show that habit’s second nature is the full life of the good promised us at the beginning of the *Philosophy of Right*, where he claims that “the system of right is the realm of actualized freedom, the world of spirit produced from within itself as a second nature” (PR § 4). For in the disposition of habit, the ethical “is simply identical with the actuality of individuals” (PR § 151). In this way, habit in the *Philosophy of Right* (but not the *Philosophy of Mind*)<sup>14</sup> marks an actualization of ethical subjective-substantiality. Not only in habit do we find “the self-will of the individual, and his own conscience [i.e., subjectivity] in its attempt to exist for itself and in opposition to the ethical substantiality, have disappeared” (PR § 152), but through, and as, this habit, “the ethical character knows that the end which moves it” is the substance or institutional, legal and customary life of the political community (PR § 153; see also Preface, 11). Yet, unlike the ancient community,<sup>15</sup> in the modern political community, ethical habit takes the shape of freedom precisely because the cultivation of habit is without any compromise to “the right of individuals” to both “their subjective determination to freedom” and “their particularity” (PR § 154).

Habit, as disposition, is not a universal shape of ethicality. In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel distinguishes *custom* from *habit* because only the former concerns the generic conditions for participation in the community as a *whole* (“their general mode of behaviour”). In contrast, our “second nature” is “actualized freedom” (see PR § 4) and is “the all pervading soul, significance, and actuality of individual existence” (PR § 151) only because it involves a concrete way of life, implicating *this* subject and *this* substance. So, if there was no unique habit of the family, there would simply be no way to ontologically anchor the family to freedom as the fully living good.

However, in the very paragraph in which Hegel introduces “[t]he family . . . as the immediate substantiality of spirit” (PR § 158), he simultaneously identifies a unique familial ethical disposition. He calls it “love” or “the disposition [in which one has] self-consciousness of one’s individuality *within this unity* . . . so that one is present in it not as an independent person but as a *member*” (PR § 158; see also § 163). To his lecture audience, Hegel makes clear that this love is no *mere feeling*. Rather, it is an instance of freedom itself: “Marriage should therefore be defined more precisely as rightfully ethical love, so that the transient, capricious, and purely subjective aspects of love are excluded from it” (PR § 161Z).

As a *habit*, rightfully ethical love is not a *generalized* behavior—that is, not a “custom”—for “love, the ethical moment in marriage, is, as love a feeling for actual individuals in the present, not for an abstraction” (PR § 180A [p. 218]). Love’s concreteness offers a twofold way to step outside of Hegel’s naturalistic-teleological grounding of the family. It does so, first, by shifting the focus to *marriage* as the site of ethical love, thereby setting aside the focus on the larger *family* and thus children with their developmental dynamic from substance to subject. Second, it does so by locating ethicality’s nature in a *second nature*—that is, a “habit”—in a way that potentially accords with the fully developed structure of freedom.

Yet, this account—rooted in the ontology of freedom, in general, and marital freedom as the habit of rightfully ethical love, in particular—is not just parallel with but is antithetical to Hegel’s naturalistic teleology. We can see this antagonism when we compare what marriage is, *for Hegel*, in the teleological and ontological accounts. Teleologically, marriage is “a mixture of substantial relationship, natural contingency, and inner arbitrariness” (PR § 189A [p. 217]). That is, marriage as the institutional shape of the union is bound up with a foundational constellation of immediateness consisting of: *this* concrete individual, his or her own given “*drives, desires, and inclinations*” and that conception of freedom appropriate to the natural will—an arbitrary choice among this givenness (PR §§ 11, 15). In contrast, as the ontological habit of rightfully ethical love, “the habit of the ethical appears as a second nature *which takes the place of the original and purely natural will*” (PR § 151; emphasis added). Since this second nature *alone* constitutes the “all pervading soul, significance, and actuality of individual existence” (PR § 151), Hegel can write, then, that “[t]he *ethical* aspect of marriage consists in the consciousness of this union as a substantial end” (PR § 163). Moreover, this ethical disposition is not simply *indifferent* to our natural givenness. Rather, it *replaces and excludes* this natural existence. The ontology of freedom is corrosive of the teleological attempt to preserve the family as nature.

We can appreciate the enormity of the confrontation between Hegel’s teleological and ontological accounts by tracing out the thoroughgoing



corrosive effect that the marital habit has on the natural aspects Hegel otherwise takes as constitutive of marriage's ethicality. We can identify three: (1) a dissolving of the idea that the child's organic unity is marriage's ethically substantial moment; (2) a suppressing of the natural drive towards sex and the natural will; and, (3), an elevating of the social institution of marriage and property's communal purpose over the naturalness of our organic "atomic individuality" (PR § 167).

First, we already know from Hegel's naturalistic-teleological account that children constitute "*an existence which has being for itself*," in contrast to the experience of unity achieved in self-consciousness that appears to it as "merely *inwardness* and *disposition*" (PR § 173). Yet, now following the *ontological* thread, the ethical disposition is no imperfection or immaturity. For, when habit becomes "the all pervading soul, significance, and actuality of individual existence," the child's physical unity becomes a naturalistic fact. Its existence is indifferent to the ethical being we—as spouses—have chosen to become. The child could be raised by anyone and still fulfill its destiny to be lifted from nature to free-for-itself subjectivity. By turning to marital habit as ethical substance instead of to the child, Hegel locates for marriage "an absolute authority and power, infinitely more firmly based than the being of nature" (PR § 146) because it endures beyond the child and its childhood.

Although we cannot now, ontologically, grasp the child's presence as marriage's ethical *completion*, the child's presence is nonetheless ethically *fitting* to marriage. The child's natural substantiveness reinforces and extends the spouses' rightfully ethical love. The child *is ours*. Yet, this "ours" is neither of father nor of mother but of *family*.<sup>16</sup> So, in Hegel's ontological account there is still an ethical truth present in the idea that in children parents have "their love and their substantial existence" (PR § 173). However, that truth now consists in the child as an *extension* of the experience of being present "not as an independent person but as a *member*" (PR § 158). The ontological account dissolves the idea that the organic coming to be of the child is the natural *actualization* of that love.

Second, the idea of rightfully ethical love as marriage's "living good" requires that ethicality live as self-consciousness. For rightfully ethical loves works to suppress the alternative motive sources in our naturalness and natural will: "the natural drive is reduced to the modality of a moment of nature which is destined to be extinguished in its very satisfaction, while the spiritual bond asserts *its rights* as the substantial factor" (PR § 163); "the sensuous moment which pertains to natural life is thereby put in its ethical context as an accidental consequence belonging to the external existence of the [genuine] ethical bond" (PR § 164); the "higher suppression and subordination of mere natural drive" occurs (PR § 164A) so that, overall, "[m]arriage should not be disrupted by passion, for the latter is subordinate to it" (PR § 163Z); and, in sum, we ought not to consider marriage as it was "[f]ormerly, especially under

most systems of natural law, . . . only in its physical aspect or natural character" (PR § 161Z). So thoroughgoing is habit's suppression of naturalness through rightfully ethical love, Hegel can write that "the ethical bond . . . may even *consist exclusively in mutual love and support*" (PR § 164; emphasis added).

Third, in Hegel's *teleological* account, naturalism captures a profound distrust that social meaning can triumph over natural meaning; thus, the marriage partner's bond-in-thought is nothing compared to the concrete unity in their child. However, in his ontological account, Hegel simply inverts this position such that now "the solemn declaration of consent to the ethical bond of marriage and its recognition and confirmation by the family and community constitute the formal *conclusion* and *actuality* of marriage" (PR § 164). This new appreciation of the social bond as marriage's "ethical determination" can only occur when "[t]his [ethical determination] consists in the fact that the consciousness *emerges from its naturalness and subjectivity* to concentrate on the thought of the substantial" (PR § 164A; emphasis added). In the ontological account, marriage cultivates the marriage partners out of both "naturalness and subjectivity." It does so for the sake of marriage *as freedom*, rather than for the sake of some freedom found outside of marriage.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, both naturalness and subjectivity are excluded by the ethicality of marriage itself. We can see both exclusions in Hegel's discussion of the consent to marriage and then in marital property.

In the moment prior to marriage, the prospective marriage partners stand before the world as independent of the merely given conditions of their coming to be together. That is, they are independent of their natural identities as the children of two preexisting families (PR § 177) and the contingencies of their courtship, whether this arises from "the particular inclinations of the two persons who enter this relationship, or in the foresight and initiative of parents, etc" (PR § 162). This givenness makes no ethical difference, for marriage itself only requires of the spouses-to-be their *formal* consent (PR § 162). In doing so, their subjectivities are taken as significant in a dual aspect. On one hand, the spouses-to-be need only acknowledge themselves, and the community needs only recognize them, as *independent beings* who can say, "I do." There can be no experience of being a member of the whole without a prior independent existence and awareness of that existence.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, the goal of the "I do" is not given by subjectivity but by marriage itself. The "I do" is ethical only insofar as it consists in the empty resolve to *abandon its subjectivity* or to "consent to *constitute a single person* and to give up their natural and individual personalities within this union" (PR § 162). The "I do" is the resolve for each to take one's ethical substance not from the natural will or subjective whim but from the demands of gaining and maintaining one's ethical being as a member of a whole. In this twin moment of the initiation of marriage (the abandonment of the given; the empty resolve

to marriage), subjectivity is acknowledged *for the sake of the cultivation out of subjectivity*.

Hegel similarly weaves this idea of ethicality as marital self-consciousness through his discussion of property. Divorced from the family, property is something endlessly exchangeable and therefore conformable to subjectivity's ascendancy as a principle of the world (see *PR* §§ 65–67, 90). Property, then, can serve “the arbitrary moment of the particular need of the *single individual*.” Yet, its ethical place within the family is to secure and support the *structure of marital freedom*. Property “is here transformed, along with the selfishness of desire, into care and acquisition for a *communal purpose*, i.e., into an *ethical quality*” (*PR* § 170). This “ethical quality,” “care” and “communal purpose” relates to, and sustains, the whole of marital life. It includes no project or purpose external to the couple's “undivided surrender.” This communal purpose means, of course, that children must be “*brought up and supported*” (*PR* § 174), not, however, because the children are the natural truth of the marriage. Rather, the spouses' ethical relationship *as spouses* requires that their activity confirm and secure them—i.e., their life “content is [now] . . . derived from [their] own self-determining activity as such” (*PR* § 15A)—in that familial mode of self-consciousness in which their individuality exists only as a member of this community. Ethically, spouses take care of the children because the latter are also members of the same community that the spouses have chosen to make the source of their “self-determining activity”.

We can see that the starting premise of Hegel's ontological account of marriage is not that “marriage is still only the immediate ethical Idea” (*PR* § 176) as it is in his teleological account. Instead, it begins with the competing idea that marriage (and the family that flows from it) can be equal to ethicality itself. Unlike the naturalistic-teleological account, when the marriage is habit its ethical existence does not dissolve when this or that concrete moment of the marriage is lost:

[N]o one aspect [of marriage] on its own constitutes the whole extent of its content which has being in and for itself—that is, of its ethical character—and one or other aspect of its existence may be absent, without prejudice to the essence of marriage.

(*PR* § 164A)

From the standpoint of his ontological account, our marital second nature needs only generate “love, trust, and the sharing of the whole of individual existence” (*PR* § 163), “mutual love and support” (*PR* § 164) or “care and acquisition for a *communal purpose*” (*PR* § 170). However, these *forms* of activity do not require any one shape of naturalness—natural drive, sex, child, natural will—nor is marriage destroyed by the absence of any of these natural moments.

Hegel interweaves his teleological and ontological accounts and moves to and fro between them. Yet, in the confrontation between these accounts, each cannot survive the other. As we have seen, from the teleological account, Hegel can identify the family as the immediate form of ethical life and thereby “a mixture of substantial relationship, natural contingency, and inner arbitrariness” (PR § 189A [p. 217]). Yet, from the standpoint of the ontology of family, he can also say that “[m]arriage [is] as an ethical act of freedom rather than an association based on immediate natural existence” (PR § 168). In this way, our search for a metaphysics of the family and marriage within Hegel’s practical philosophy produces not *one answer* but *two*. Each account nonetheless aspires to foundationally bind family and marriage to the good for human beings—to the fullness of freedom.

In this confrontation of teleology with ontology, we now arrive at a problem. On one hand, the natural or sensuous element of marriage—the sexual union of two human beings orientated towards a life together, whose togetherness or unity is actualized in children or the openness to children—seems to provide us with the recognizably concrete determinations that make marriage, *marriage*. These determinations allow us to locate ethical marriage within our own world, even if it can only appear as ethically immature and as a passing, propaedeutical moment. On the other hand, the habit of rightfully ethical love, with its deep concern only a shape of self-consciousness that can be lived in the empty form of care, mutual love, sharing and communal purpose, makes sense of marriage as an ethical act of freedom but not the concrete shape and life of marriage itself.

What we seem to be left with in Hegel’s metaphysics of marriage is, then, a choice between marriage as nature without the fullness of freedom or the fullness of freedom without the recognizable concreteness of marital life.

### III. A Hegelian Solution: Sex and Embodied Freedom

Our attempt to make sense of a Hegelian metaphysics of the family (with marriage at its core) has met with a puzzle that seems to have no obvious solution. In the collision between the teleological and ontological accounts, Hegel himself does not decide the issue one way or the other. On one hand, within the *Philosophy of Right*, the broadly teleological focus continues in the movement from family to civil society to political state and then again the account of world history that ends the work. On the other hand, the ontological account—in which the structure and demands of freedom are fully actualized—animates the theoretical framework that provides the hermeneutic for the *Philosophy of Right* as a whole, from the progression of aphorisms in the preface<sup>19</sup> to the laying out of the logic of freedom in the introduction<sup>20</sup> to the elaboration of ethicality’s living structure at the beginning of both the section on *Sittlichkeit* as a whole and the subsection on the state as “the actuality of the ethical Idea” (PR § 258).

In this chapter's final section, I outline three ways forward toward an Hegelian metaphysics of marriage: one by accepting the teleological account, one by accepting the ontological account (both in section III.A) and one developed over the final two subsections, by turning to a Hegelian account of sexually embodied freedom (sections III.B and III.C).

### A. *Naturalistic-Teleology or Empty Ontology?*

If we accepted that Hegel's metaphysics of marriage required a choice between the naturalistic teleological account and the empty ontological one, we would still need to ask what each one would entail for Hegel's practical philosophy.

To choose the naturalistic-teleological account is to accept that marriage is an ethically immature shape of freedom. Marriage cultivates us, yet the result of this cultivation will be merely a propaedeutic for a more complete freedom to be institutionally and dispositionally achieved elsewhere. Apart from this preparatory moment, the family constitutes a *natural* home only for those incapable of the fullness of ethical life, whether permanently or temporarily. At its ethical best, marriage provides those individuals destined for economic or political life with a first experience of *self-cultivated* ethicality, not *in* the family but *out* of it. The family's naturalism and natural shape would persist within the ethical system only because the family cannot be expected to live up to freedom's demand of allowing a second nature to replace the first one, that marriage is truly an ethical act of freedom, or carries with it the fullness of freedom that is the fullness of being at home and the enjoyment of life that Hegel's account of ethical life otherwise promises.

Alternatively, we might embrace the ontological account's promise of marriage as a full and equal moment of freedom. Then, we take the habit of rightfully ethical love as "a second nature which takes the place of the original and purely natural will" (*PR* § 151). With this denaturing comes, of course, the abandonment of ethicality's natural shapes: the natural will and our natural drive toward sex, and children. In its place arrives new activity sustained in and as sociality: care, the communally recognized bond of marriage, the self-constituting identity as a member of a whole. Yet, when *care* and *communal purpose, mutual love* and *support* alone generate the lived shape of the marital experience, the boundaries of marriage and the family are radically loosened, and many configurations of marital and familial life become ethically possible. Here, ironically, Hegel's *ontological* position produces results close to contemporary liberal ones, such as Elizabeth Brake develops, in which

[i]n an ideal liberal egalitarian society, minimal marriage would consist only in rights which recognize (e.g., status designation, burial rights, bereavement leave) and support (e.g., immigration rights, caretaking leave) caring relationships. Care, broadly construed, may

involve physical or emotional caretaking or simply a caring attitude (an attitude of concern for a particular other).<sup>21</sup>

Of course, as, Brake notes, when care becomes marriage's foundation, "the state must recognize and support all relationships—same-sex, polygamous, polyamorous, urban tribes—if it recognizes and supports any."<sup>22</sup> We have gained marriage as freedom but lost marriage itself in the process.

However, I suggest, between Hegel's metaphysics of marriage as teleology or ontology there is a third way forward. This path emerges if we reflect on the mystery at the heart of the ethical act of marriage. Of all Hegel's ethical spheres, marriage's freedom *alone* is initiated, mediated, and lived through "actual individuals in the present" (PR § 180A [p. 218]). Why? The teleological answer is that our given nature necessarily *constitutes* the shape of *this possibility of the* ethical. Then this mediation of freedom through another becomes a symptom of the family's ethical immaturity, and its absence in the more mature ethical spheres (civil society and the political state), unsurprisingly. The ontological answer, leaves this question simply as a mystery since, as Hegel himself acknowledges substantive care and communal purpose are present in the nonmarital institutions of the agricultural estate and upper house (PR §§ 203A, 304–6, 312), and so nothing about the life of rightfully ethical love seems to require *marriage* itself.

To think through this feature of marriage and how the full requirements of marital freedom might require the mediation through the naturalness of the concrete other, I argue, takes us away from both the metaphysics of Hegel's teleological and ontological accounts. Yet, it does not take us away from a Hegelian insight implicit in his account of *actualized ethicality* itself: Freedom is always embodied freedom.

### ***B. Hegel's Practical Philosophy and the Possibility of Embodied Freedom***

With its overriding emphasis on "substance made *concrete* by subjectivity" (PR § 144; see also §§ 146, 151), the importance or even presence of the idea of embodied freedom is not easy to see within the *Philosophy of Right*. We primarily associate this "substance" with the system of ethical institutions, and subjectivity with the ethical "knowledge and volition in self-consciousness" (PR § 142). As Hegel puts it, "[t]he activity of the [free] will consists in cancelling the contradiction between subjectivity and objectivity and in translating its ends from their subjective determination into an objective one, while at the same time remaining *with itself* in this objectivity" (PR § 28). Yet, our interior life as embodied beings—"whether present immediately through nature, through needs, desires, and drives, or given and determined in some other way" (PR §

5)—also consists of a substance. We, as free beings, must come to be at home in this interiority no less than in the world *externally* present to hand. That is, the demand of subjective-substantiality *itself* requires that we *take possession*—“cance[l] the contradiction between subjectivity and substance”—of our embodied existence. This implicit Hegelian call to be at home with our embodied selves as well as the external world is a call to be free beings in the fullest sense. To be at home with ourselves here is not a matter of *anthropology*; it is a matter of *ethicality*.<sup>23</sup>

Hegel himself gestures toward the simultaneous social and embodied shape of freedom in a number of places. Lyrically, this idea is expressed in the *Philosophy of Right*'s Preface in the aphorism “*Here is the rose, dance here*” (PR Preface p. 22). For in the dance, one has the joyful inhabiting of the body in the moment of sociality. Indeed, social form, intention and body are one in this moment. Hegel immediately contrasts this joyful embodiment with the deadness of “those who have received the inner call *to comprehend*” yet, rather than a “*reconciliation* with actuality,” experience only the miserable separation of their thoughts (“reason as self-conscious spirit”) and the truth of the world (“reason as present actuality”). Instead of a joyful dwelling in the world, they dwell in “the fetter of some abstraction or other” (PR Preface, 22). In this inversion of the dance's unity, the body and the world appear to this individual as strange and discomfiting.

Similarly, within the *Philosophy of Right*'s Introduction, Hegel's discussion of the will's logical structure implicitly engages the need for embodiment. We see it first when Hegel heuristically invokes the individual's “ability to free [him]self from everything, to renounce all ends, and to abstract from everything . . . even his own life: he can commit suicide” (PR § 5Z; see also § 7A). This invocation is intended to show that such a renunciation only destroys freedom itself: The demands of the free will cannot be thought apart from the demands of embodiment and suicide brings this entanglement to the fore.

However, embodiment next appears only as a problem in the shape of the “natural will” (PR §§ 11–21)—that is, the experience of finding our activity governed by “*drives, desires, and inclinations*” that appear in us as “naturally determined” (PR § 11). As an immediate, interior and bodily wellspring of activity such drives, desires, and inclinations are presented by Hegel as an obstacle to freedom. On one hand, the natural will leaves us with no unified self. We have only conflicting objects and directions of desire (PR §§ 17 & Z). On the other hand, our own individualized attempts to make this immediate content ours will fail. We may choose amongst the natural will's given content (PR §§ 12–13, 15–17), but such choosing still leaves the *reasons for the choice* and *what is chosen* inscrutable. At best, the natural will makes freedom appear as “*arbitrariness*” (PR § 15), even if that arbitrariness involves such convolutions as reflecting on these drives, desires and inclinations by “representing



them, estimating them, and comparing them with one another and them with the means they employ, their consequences etc.” (PR § 20). Freedom requires that the will must have “itself as its infinite form, as its content, object, and end” (PR § 21), but the natural will itself makes the animating “content, object, and end” inscrutable. We cannot be at home in them. Although the natural will is not a path forward to freedom, that it is a problem at all emerges only against the background concern with embodiment within Hegel’s practical philosophy.

Now, this background aspiration of embodiment seems to be eclipsed as Hegel develops his full account of freedom at the end of the introduction and then works out its concrete shape in Abstract Right, Morality, and Ethical Life. In this movement, the central question of freedom becomes the relationship between subjectivity as interiority (PR § 25) and objectivity as “*external* existence” (PR § 26). That is, Hegel’s practical philosophy seems to focus exclusively on reconstructing the rational *system of institutions* that permits the fullness of participation between subjective will and institutional world. Yet, the importance of embodied freedom to Hegel’s project has not disappeared. In Abstract Right, Hegel enters into a discussion of embodied freedom. The context is critical. Abstract right concerns a shape of the self (he calls it “personality”) that seeks its freedom in a peculiar manner. Personhood begins with the natural will, yet seeks to overcome its interior givenness and arbitrariness by rejecting this interiority *as constitutive of itself*. Indeed, this interiority means for personhood that it is not free but, rather, “completely determined in all respects (in my inner arbitrary will, drive, and desire, as well as in relation to my immediate external existence)” (PR § 35). Personhood’s solution to this problem of freedom is to “know myself [only] in my finitude as *infinite, universal, and free*” and therefore to have a “self-consciousness” of my atomic individuality (*Einzelheit*) as “contentless” (PR § 35). To pursue such freedom ought then to require a complete rejection of the idea that “[t]he human being, in his *immediate* existence in himself, is a natural entity” (PR § 57; see also § 70). The givenness of the body *ought, then, also* to be rejected.

Yet, because this implication of denaturing looms so large, Hegel develops in Abstract Right a counterweight reminder. Over a handful of paragraphs, he formulates a threefold idea involving, first, the taking possession of the organic body; second, the mechanism for this taking possession; and, third, a mediating moment of individual personality (in the nontechnical sense, as opposed to “personhood”).

First, Hegel reinforces the idea that the body has a reality that requires my respect and attention. For, my body is to be recalled, not forgotten, as a site for freedom: “As a person, I am myself an *immediate individual* [and] this means in the first place that I am *alive* in this *organic body*” (PR § 47). Of course, the mere presence of “the body [a]s immediate existence . . . is not commensurate with the spirit [i.e., freedom]” since

its givenness remains inscrutable and therefore something I cannot be at home in. Nonetheless, a possibility of embodied self-possession remains, for the givenness of the body can become “spirit’s willing organ and soul-inspired instrument” by “first be[ing] *taken possession of* by the spirit” (PR § 48). This taking possession is not an acquisition of something foreign to me. Instead, “it consists . . . in translating into *actuality* what one is in terms of one’s concept” (PR § 57). The freedom *which I am* is to be actualized in “this organic body” in which “I am alive.” So, Hegel reminds us, even in the conception of freedom most hostile to embodiment, I can *know* and *live* this embodiment as an intrinsic aspect of my true self: “In so far as I am alive, my soul (the concept and, on a higher level, the free entity) and my body are not separated”; properly grasped, “my body is the existence of freedom” (PR § 48A).

Second, rather than specify in any detail this “taking possession of oneself” (PR § 57), Hegel merely speaks of it, generally, as a twofold cultivation. On one hand, embodied freedom is “the training of my organic body in various skills”; on the other, it is “the education of my spirit” (PR § 52A [p. 83]). Its result will be “a more or less complete penetration and taking possession” of the body by spirit (PR § 52A [p. 83]). Hegel could be read as implying the complete plasticity of body to its possession by spirit. Yet, he has already indicated that the very organic nature of the body provides some limit to this taken possession—for instance, if I try to abstract myself so thoroughly from it, for example, through suicide, I kill freedom along with the organic body.

Third, at the same time, Hegel also implies that between the individual organic body and spirit is a mediating set of conditions unique to each potential self. This mediating experience he identifies as those “substantial determinations, which constitute *my own distinct personality* and *the universal essence of my self-consciousness* . . . They include my personality, in general, my universal freedom of will, ethical life, and religion” (PR § 66; emphasis added). Hegel’s point is quite complex. By contrasting “my own distinct personality” with “the universal essence of my self-consciousness,” he points to something mediating the internal organic body and the external ethical world: that irreducible uniqueness of my *relationship* to those *internal* inclinations, drives, and appetites which makes my *subjectivity*, *mine* (“my own distinct personality”). In contrast, the “universal essence of my self-consciousness” gains its character from three different factors: “my universal freedom of will, ethical life, and religion.” Each of these does not involve any “distinct” content. Rather, they only involve the universal forms of *relating to systems of content*: (1) “[U]niversal freedom of will” is the possibility of abstraction from all given content, internal and external—for example, I can divorce or commit suicide, I can change jobs or retire; (2) “ethical life” is the system of external objectivity in which I might find my particular place; and (3) “religion” is a rooting of the individual within the ethical system

as a whole since religion “integrates the state at the deepest level of the disposition [of its citizens]” (PR § 270 [p. 295]).

What does taking possession of my organic body mean for me? It is necessarily mediated through “my own distinct personality” with its unique sensibility and attentiveness to my givenness—“my inner arbitrary will, drive, and desire”—while *simultaneously* being mediated through my specific commitments *within* the ethical system and *to* the totality of that system. To take possession of my organic body is not, then, the mere learning of a skill, although Hegel speaks of it that way in the *Philosophy of Mind* (e.g., PG §§ 410–411).<sup>24</sup> Rather, it is an intrinsic moment of the very identity-constituting process of freedom’s interpenetration of subjectivity and substantiality that can only occur within ethical life. To *inhabit* the body, then, constitutes a fullness in what otherwise appears as the outwardly focused process of having “substance made *concrete* by subjectivity” (PR § 144; see also §§ 146, 151).

Having reminded us that the organic body cannot be forgotten, Hegel does not explicitly return to embodied freedom in the *Philosophy of Right*. By the brute act of setting a life in motion *within* a fully ethical system of institutions, Hegel implies that we will come to be at home in the external world and take possession of ourselves as a matter of course.<sup>25</sup> So, it does not matter if our ethical life begins by being “influenced by his natural disposition, birth, and circumstances . . . [or if the] ultimate and essential determinant is *subjective opinion* and the *particular arbitrary will*” (PR § 206). Thus, the conditions for fully being at home “*basically* . . . includes *everyone*” (PR Preface, 14) and the main obstacle to this process of cultivation is the individual who, “especially in youth[,] . . . balks at the notion of committing himself to a particular estate [i.e., ethical sphere]” (PR § 207A).

In most ethical spheres, what is required of our organic body is simply its *receptivity* to this brute educational process—that is, that our body can live the demands of our *second nature*. Although Hegel does not put it this way, we could say that, in the case of activity within civil society or the political state, to live out our second nature requires the use of the hand and the mind. Now, the hand by its very factual constitution is considered by Hegel to be “the absolute tool” (PG § 411A). Similarly, the mind is capable of a “*theoretical education*” (*theoretische Bildung*) so it can attend to “the variety of determinations and objects [*Gegenstände*] which are worthy of interest” (PR § 197). In this way, the mere organic existence of the hand and mind is simultaneously the existence of a *receptivity* to *actualizing* in my embodied being those ethical demands I have chosen to be cultivated to. Imperfections, as well as outright failures of bodily receptivity, become, we now have to see, instances in which the ethical’s full coming-to-be is impeded or prevented.

Hegel himself implicitly points to this importance of embodiment when he notes the rightness of tests for our ability to bodily *inhabit* a

particular ethical shape of life. For example, corporations are “to admit members in accordance with their objective qualification of skill and rec-titude<sup>26</sup> . . . and to educate others so as to make them eligible for mem-ber-ship” (PR § 252). Yet the nearly limitless receptivity of the hand and mind are such that one can say that there could be a corporation for *every aptitude and interest* since “the so-called *natural right* to practice one’s skill . . . is limited only to the extent that, in this context, the skill is rationally determined” (PR § 254; see also § 251). Similarly, the civil ser-vice, through a combination of volition, “knowledge and proof of abil-ity . . . guarantees[,] every citizen the possibility of joining the universal estate” (PR § 291).

As embodied, ethical habit “takes the place of the original and purely natural will” (PR § 151) but does not *denature* our organic body and its facticity. Nor does it rob that facticity’s contribution to our natural will or even rob me of “my own distinct personality.” Rather, in becoming “the all pervading soul, significance, and actuality of individual exist-ence” (PR § 151), I am fitted to the *external* ethical world such that I inhabit a particular place within it *and* am at home with it *as the ethical being I have become*. At the same time, I am fitted to the *internal* factual world of my organic body—not as the site of merely natural life or the idiosyncratic life of my *immediate* personality, but equally *as the ethical being I have become*. I see actualized the capacities, skills and techniques that are the living shape of my second nature in and as my organic nature and “my own distinct personality.”

Insofar as we are taking possession of our hands and minds, these universal tools of our bodies neither present an obstacle to embodied freedom nor do they provide any *directionality* for that freedom. For, the outward acts that we perform, the skills that we learn and employ, the training that we engage in *emerge out of* the end for which they are organized: the second nature they seek to attain, secure and pro-mote. So, even though these acts, skills and training all must *respond* to the factual limits of our hands and minds, this sort of embodiment itself cannot shape, or differentiate the shape of, one mode of ethical life from another—just as being upright articulates a general mind pos-session of the body but without specifying any particular ethical self (PG § 410 [p. 132]). We can engage in the same act of book keep-ing, machine repair, website design and client correspondence whether in the corporation, agricultural estate or civil service. Only the *ethical habit* out of which it is done makes the same act an *ethically* different instance of embodied freedom.<sup>27</sup> In these examples, the ethical content of embodiment is decisively shaped by the ontological possibilities of freedom (i.e., the logical relation of subject to substance that separates family from civil society from the state as a distinct ethical moment of freedom). This ethical content is not shaped by the factual possibilities of our embodied facticity.<sup>28</sup>

Of course, there are moments of our embodiment not part of any ethical self-possession. We can think here of all those nonvoluntary functions of our body as well as those voluntary ones that are, as this particular self, indifferent to our freedom because they have no *specific* bearing on *this* freedom—for example, for the most part: walking, breathing, sitting, standing and so on. Yet, the inverse is also possible: Aspects of our organic embodiment might be *uniquely fitted*, by their very facticity, *to be taken possession of by this or that* ethical self. Now, if there were such organic aspects, they would be uniquely part of the *embodied fullness* or *perfection* of our ethical being. To abandon or exclude such embodied self-possession when otherwise possible for *me* would be an imperfection in freedom.

Let us now explore what a specifically *marital* ethical habit might demand of embodied freedom.

### C. Marriage and Sexually Embodied Freedom

If rightfully ethical love was actualized only as mutual love, support, care and communal purpose then there would be nothing unique about the outward performance of marriage. To inquire into a uniquely embodied shape of marriage as an *ethical act of freedom* we must turn from Hegel's empty ontology and his naturalistic-teleological accounts. Hegel himself provides a telling moment of ambivalence toward these two metaphysical grounds. Writing about other understandings of marriage, Hegel says:

It is a further abstraction if the divine and substantial is separated from its existence in such a way that feeling and the consciousness of spiritual unity are categorized as what is falsely called *Platonic love*. This separation is associated with the monastic attitude which defines the moment of natural life as utterly *negative* and, by this very separation, endows it [ironically] with infinite importance in itself.

(PR § 163A)

Here, Hegel is aware that neither ontology's denaturing (with its emphasis on care without consummation) nor teleology's naturalism (with its emphasis on the fixed ethical meaning of our sexually differentiated organic being) will do.

Hegel himself points to an underdeveloped alternative in his opening discussion of gender essentialism. Here we might grasp the significance of sexual differentiation as something that becomes so, not by nature, but by the ethical circumstance we are in: "The *natural* determinacy of the two sexes acquires an *intellectual* and *ethical* significance by virtue of its rationality" (PR § 165). In emphasizing that facticity "acquires" this ethicality, Hegel inverts the teleological movement from nature to

freedom. Now, it is our ethical, identity-constituting actions (the consent to marry, the self-consciousness of rightfully ethical love) and the institution (marriage) that *gives* parts of our organic body a significance for freedom. That is, marital freedom itself might *pick out* or *make significant* a uniquely embodied experience. Yet, without a readymade or developed alternative within the *Philosophy of Right* itself, we must ourselves rethink the marital relationship between embodiment and freedom in a more Hegelian way. I do so by asking how the unique factual moment of sexual differentiation might be *uniquely fitted* to being *ethically inhabited* by a marital second nature, i.e., by rightfully ethical love.

As we know, the foundational structure of the experience of this second nature is “hav[ing] self-consciousness of one’s individuality *within this [marital] unity* . . . so that one is present in it not as an independent person but as a *member*” (PR § 158). Hegel’s own attention to sexual differentiation and sexual union as a moment of acquired ethicality points us to the possibility of a unique, organic *responsiveness* to this habit. In what way is this sexual differentiation factually unique? The answer is not that our sexual differentiation concerns the unique capacity for reproduction (regardless of whether *this* particular sexual organ can carry out *this* function at *this* time). Rather, it is that the facticity of our reproductive capacity shows that it alone among our biological givenness is not a *complete* organic system (an *organ*) within the larger organic system of the individual body, whether male or female. That is, the distinct sexual capacity of the male and the female each achieves its significance—becomes biologically what it is *as a reproductive capacity*—only as a *member* of a larger organic whole that lies outside of its immediate and individual factual nature: the human reproductive system. Although it hardly needs saying, this reproductive system is only *completed* or *actualized in the act of sexually differentiated intercourse*.<sup>29</sup>

So, while the actions of these sexually differentiated individuals *activate* the reproductive system, this system itself does not exist as a biological *substance* independent of the activity. Instead, the reproductive system exists only as the interpenetration of subjective action and the incomplete substance of our atomistic reproductive capacity. In this sense, the actualizing and activating of the reproductive system through intercourse has the very structure of ethicality in general. It is neither subject nor substance but lives only as a moment of subjective-substantiality. Moreover, its structure specifically articulates that of the marital second nature: “that one is present in it not as an independent person but as a *member*.” Put in biologically rather than disposition terms, we can rewrite Hegel’s phrase to say “that one’s *sexual capacity* is present in the *reproductive system* not as an independent *organ* whose functions are achievable by itself but as a member of the *reproductive system*.” We ought to grasp this structure of sexual differentiation and sexual union as the rationality that the habit of rightfully ethical love activates and thereby inhabits.

On its own, this factual structure of human reproduction has no ethical significance. Yet, our natural sexual facticity is uniquely fitted to being taken possession of by marital second nature, giving to marital freedom a unique shape of embodiment and a unique fullness or extension to its shape of freedom.

This uniquely embodied marital freedom gives us a new way to meta-physically secure marriage as necessary *and* ethically mature within the architectonics of Hegel's practical philosophy. Habit requires that "the spiritual bond [still] asserts *its rights* as the substantial factor" but now *not* at the expense of "the natural drive" (PR § 163). Maritally embodied freedom shows the significance of that drive and its actions as the embodied shape of this chosen habit. That is, the right that the marital disposition asserts is not *against* the natural drive but to *integrate it* into the fullness of ethical life as "disposition and actuality" (PR § 163). Marital freedom acquires a natural *aspect*, not as a symptom of its ethical immaturity, but as the actualization of the embodied fullness of its freedom. Conversely, our sexual facticity acquires its own ethical significance, not *contingently* but as an intrinsically necessary aspect of this one, unique shape of freedom.

The idea of sexually embodied marital freedom refocuses the significance of the constellation of the natural to marriage: the natural unity of the sexually produced child and the communal purpose of attending to the natural demands and dynamic of childhood. Now, the natural unity of marriage is shifted away from the child to sexually differentiated sex as the *fullest* inhabitation of our organic body by rightfully ethical love. Yet, the truth of sex's organic unity, ironically, is not *reproduction* but the actualization of the *embodied fullness* of our marital second nature. In order for this embodied freedom to be actualized, we can no longer speak simply of *any* institutional shape plastic to the demands of care, communal purpose, mutual love and sharing in life. To grasp what marital freedom requires of the institution of marriage is to grasp an institution that embraces embodied freedom as intrinsic to the shape of this ethical moment. That is, since marital embodied freedom is only possible through the *intrinsic involvement* of another, rightfully ethical love requires an institutional shape in which embodied union can occur and the ethical second nature can be continually lived out.

As a metaphysics of marriage, sexually embodied freedom provides a directionality toward the shape of marriage *as love, sex and the sharing of the whole of individual existence*. It does so without the teleological account's requirement of the ethical immaturity of this naturalness and without the ontological account's inability to make sense of why this institutional shape of freedom alone must occur through another. Of course, within this alternative, Hegelian metaphysics of marriage, marriage does not then *exist* for the *purpose* of sex.<sup>30</sup> Sex, though, belongs



*intrinsically* as a moment of the *fulfillment* of this unique ethical disposition of freedom.

### Conclusion: An Outline for a Hegelian Ethics of Marriage

In this Hegelian account of marriage as sexually embodied freedom, Hegel's grand promise to properly ground *marriage* in a metaphysics of human completion can be fulfilled—even if the exact manner of its satisfaction eludes Hegel himself within the *Philosophy of Right*. In fulfilling this promise, this new metaphysics of marriage does not abandon the ancient concern with the relationship between *erōs*, *aphrodisia*, *philia* and *oikos* and the good life. Of course, its language is now rightfully ethical love, sex's organic unity, care and sharing of life and the institution of marriage. Nonetheless, this new metaphysics of marriage still reenacts Hegel's aphorisms that orient us to the good life: “*Idou Rhodos, idou kai pēdēma* / *Hic Rhodus, hic saltus*” and “*Here is the rose, dance here*” (*PR* Preface, 21–22). For what was impossibly high and difficult to achieve in the ancient accounts—Plato's *Symposium*'s vast open sea of the beautiful and the *Phaedrus*'s concern with bodily desire that does not disorder, Aristotle's perfect friendship, Plutarch's complete unity of marriage—has been made actualizable without the good having thereby been lowered.

Now, in this conclusion, I want to quickly outline, rather abstractly, how the *Philosophy of Right*'s implicit metaphysics of marriage as sexually embodied freedom provides us with a systemic set of concerns from which we might develop a Hegelian ethics of marriage. We can express these concerns as three hermeneutics of ethical marriage: a hermeneutic of *cultivation*, of *stability* and of *perfection*.

First, the hermeneutic of *cultivation* draws our attention to the *coming-to-be* of that unique habit or “second nature” in which each marriage partner comes to see their individuality as a member of the community of marriage (*PR* § 158). Here, a constellation of questions emerges. Already within Hegel's existing accounts, we must ask of subjectivity, “Is a *spouse* the ethical being that I *wish* to become?” and of institutions, “Does its order and organization educate or miseducate us to this disposition of ethical marriage?” However, the truth of marriage as sexually embodied marital freedom adds two new questions: “Given my ‘own distinct personality’—through which my ethically transformative commitments are mediated—am I *capable* of being the self I *wish* to be?” and “Is the marital institution itself open to the range of distinct personalities that are capable of becoming free in this way, regardless of how different or surprising such personalities might appear to us?”

These first two questions radically shift the focus of marriage away from traditional answers to ends of marriage such as Milton's concern with companionship,<sup>31</sup> Aquinas's and Locke's with children and their

care<sup>32</sup> and even Augustine's and Kant's emphasis on the rightful satisfaction of concupiscence.<sup>33</sup> Instead, these first questions of subjectivity's wish and institution's cultivating possibilities highlight the importance of consent-to-spousehood (i.e., marriage is about *being married*)<sup>34</sup> as well as the educative possibilities that adhere to different formal structures of marriage (e.g., monogamous versus polygamous and polyamorous marriage; permissible consanguinity).

The last two questions, though, allow us to now engage with the specifically contemporary issue of the relationship between marriage and *sexual identity*. Of course, here the concern is not with the *naturalness* of this or that sexual identity or act.<sup>35</sup> The possibilities of freedom are not immediately present in our natural will nor are they given in our organic facticity. Yet, sexual identity does have an ethical salience for marriage, but only insofar as (1) it is a dimension of my distinct personality and thereby mediates the empty *form* of my ethical commitment to marital freedom, either moving that commitment away from or toward a marital *self-consciousness*, and (2) the marital institution rightly both *opens itself to genuine possibilities* of commitment—regardless of the distinct personalities in which those commitments reside—and *closes itself off* to possibilities that contradict such commitments.

Thus, being transgender,<sup>36</sup> gay, straight, bi-, two-spirited and so on, only *prima facie* appears relevant to the question of marriage but really is not. For there is nothing about such an identity being an integral aspect of a “distinct personality” that *in itself* (or *for itself*) mediates an individual's dispositional possibilities away from or toward marriage's second nature (as opposed to who we find ourselves desiring to be with). For this reason, marital institutions that close themselves off to the mediation of such “personalities” (i.e., moments of identity) would, on this score, be unethical.

Second, apart from a hermeneutic of *cultivation* to marriage, a Hegelian marriage ethic needs to employ a hermeneutic of *stability*. Hegel himself invokes this hermeneutic with the “third ethical authority” that oversees divorce. For at its heart is a concern for sustaining marital freedom against forces ethically external to it—in this case, the contingency of *feeling* versus the settled *personality* that can maintain the marital disposition. Hegel deploys this hermeneutic in a much more thorough-going manner in his account of civil society. There, the sources of its instability are explored (e.g., unmanaged market, poverty, lack of regimes of recognition) and possible institutional responses are identified in the shape of external, countervailing powers (e.g., administration of justice, police), as well as systems of internal recognition and material support (e.g., corporations). What would it mean to also engage in the same searching concern for stability within the marital possibility of freedom? Here a similar constellation of concerns—for example, poverty, requirements recognition and the acquisition of resources—might emerge. Hegel's own

teleological and ontological accounts of marriage make us fundamentally indifferent either to the stability of marriage (for the family is destined to pass away into more mature forms of freedom) or to the particular texture of marital life (the activity of care and mutual support seem possible in any conditions). However, an ethic of marital *embodied freedom* calls us to be attentive to the external impediments and destructive forces that keep us from the fullness of living in union with one another. While dispositions can be maintained at a distance, as can the provision of care, the stability of embodied sharing requires an interrogation of those matters of resources, recognition and canceling of countervailing forces that physically and not only dispositionally damage *the organic closeness* of marital life.

Finally, the hermeneutic of *perfection* emerges as a distinct concern of sexually embodied marital freedom. Sexual embodiment, as we have shown, is a moment of the *fullness of ethical being* rather than the *cultivation* of such a being. The demand for and shape of embodiment emerge only afterward from—and as an intrinsic dynamic of—the literally self-constituting choice to take on *this* second nature rather than *that* one or, even, *none at all*. This hermeneutic requires that we inquire into how our marital institutions, and their supporting cultural and legal regime, hold open a possibility of embodied perfection. This holding open, though, must be understood *as a complement* rather than a *barrier to* cultivation. So, for instance, unlike civil society and the state, this holding open uniquely directs the freedom-constituting relationship between subjectivity and substance away from a relationship between subjectivity and *institution*. Instead, it mediates that relationship *first through another*. For only through another can the fullness of embodied freedom unique to marriage be held open.

“Holding open,” though, is not compulsion: Marriage *cannot* require of spouses that they engage in this possibility of sexually embodied perfection themselves, whether the latter would mean that the institution ensures that only the “perfect” genital configurations are in place or that the marriage be consummated or renewed through spousal intercourse as Solon required of Athenians husbands to have intercourse with their wives thrice monthly.<sup>37</sup> Instead of a compulsory perfection, the hermeneutic of perfection gives us two different lines of inquiry: (1) How *specifically* does each “distinct personality” mediate between the self-constituting demands of marital freedom (i.e., the shape of self-consciousness and the institutional shape which cultivates and secures it) and its embodied shape (i.e., those *sorts of embodiment* that I might be able to maritally commit myself to), and (2) what *specifically* does the factual condition of *our spousal bodies* permit? Let us take these two points in turn.

As we know, the general idea of embodied freedom takes us from the marital disposition to another human being. This relationship becomes *particularized for us* through our own distinct personality. Hegel is right

to exclude transitory or contingent attractions and desires here. Yet, there is an infinite variety of human desire and attraction—including and going beyond what we call sexual orientation—which may constitute a fundamental dimension of our personality. As a part of our *personality*, this variety is to be respected (think of the third ethical authority regulating divorce), not cultivated away. At the same time, we have then before us, in our partner, another body. Between us, we have a set of factual possibilities of organic union (e.g., given the genitals we have) as well as the situational conditions for this union (say, because of illness, fatigue, age, annoyance with our spouse, etc.). As Hegel reminds his lecture audience, “I cannot be a friend, etc. *in general*, I am necessarily *this* friend living with *these* friends in *this* place at *this* time and in *this* situation” (PG § 406Z [p. 102]).

Taken together, the particularization of the relationship and the possibilities of sexual embodiment determine *for us* the perfection of the fullness of freedom *fitting* for us as *this couple here*. That is, the terms of marital freedom are not plastic to desire, whim or hope. Yet, the terms of the embodied *perfection* of marriage can only be known by engaging in a hermeneutic of perfection that attends to the spouses involved. In this sense, all that embodied freedom requires *of us* is a *commitment* to our embodied perfection, whatever that might be *for us*. Equally it requires of our institutions a commitment to an openness to allowing us to activate *our perfection* within marriage.

In this sense, perfection does not place the demands of marriage too high, even as marriage is metaphysically grounded in the fullness of freedom. If, as we have said, the imperative of the good is lyrically expressed in the *Philosophy of Right* as “*Here is the rose, dance here,*” this new, Hegelian metaphysics of marriage gives us the resources to see that there as many ways of dancing within the fullness of marriage and none that can be wholly specified apart from the dance partners themselves.

## Notes

- 1 G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen W. Wood and trans. H. B. Nisbet. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Cited by Section number: a “Z” indicates material from his *Zusatz* (addition), an “A” indicating material contained in his *Anmerkung* (remark). Where the *Zusatz* or *Anmerkung* is long, a page number is also provided. Material from the preface is cited by page number.
- 2 Love, sex, friendship and household. For example, Plato’s imagery of *erōs* as an ascent that takes us upwards to the “vast open sea of the beautiful,” “not infected with human flesh, colors, or a lot of other mortal foolishness” (Plato, *Plato’s Symposium*, trans. Seth Benardete. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 210d–e, 211d–e) or the disembodied soul’s epochal journey in the heavens and its glimpses (and then embodied recollections) of the foundational, sustaining order that “place beyond heaven” (Plato, *Plato’s Phaedrus*, trans. Stephen Scully. (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing,

- 2003), 246a–250a); Aristotle's perfect friendship as the simultaneously encounter with the fulness of one's own soul and the life with another (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Joe Sachs. (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, R. Pullins Company, 2002), IX.4, 9; Xenophon's Ischomachos's claim that the order of marital life emerges out of the divine shaping of human existence to require shelter and not live in the open like cattle (Xenophon, *Oeconomicus: A Social and Historical Commentary*, ed. Sarah B. Pomeroy. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), ch. 7, 17–18; and, Plutarch's delightful wedding speech to his students Pollianos and Eurydice in which marriage creates the couple as a new, unified being with its own mode of consciousness (Plutarch, *Advice to the Bride and Groom* in *Plutarch's Advice to the Bride and Groom and A Consolation to His Wife: English Translations, Commentary, Interpretive Essays, and Bibliography*, ed. Sarah B. Pomeroy. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 142 [34], 10.
- 3 Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Naturalism: Mind, Nature, and the Final Ends of Life*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 9.
- 4 Italo Testa, "Second Nature and Recognition: Hegel and the Social Space", *Critical Horizon*, vol. 10, no. 3 (2009): 341–70, 364. See Hegel's section on Anthropology in the *Philosophy of Mind*, esp. §§ 409–412.
- 5 G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977). Cited by paragraph number.
- 6 Pinkard, *Hegel's Naturalism*, 9, 19, and 31 respectively.
- 7 Aristotle, *Politics* in *Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, vol. 21, trans. H. Rackham. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1944), I.2 1252a25–30.
- 8 Aristotle, *Politics*, I.3 1253b5.
- 9 *Ibid.*, I.2 1253a1–5, a25–30.
- 10 *Ibid.*, I.2 1252a25.
- 11 For example, "so there is none that can estimate the evil and the affliction of a natural hatred in matrimony"; "an unspeakable and unremitting sorrow and offence, whereof no amends can be made, no cure, no ceasing but by divorce" (John Milton, "The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce," in *The Prose Works of John Milton: With a Biographical Introduction by Rufus Wilmot Griswold*. In Two Volumes. (Philadelphia: John W. Moore, 1847). Vol. 1 (available The Online Library of Liberty A Project of Liberty Fund, Inc.), ch. XVI).
- 12 Aristotle, *Politics*, I.12 1259a35–b15.
- 13 Aristotle, *Politics*, IV.1 1288b30–40.
- 14 In comparison, Hegel's discussion of *habit* in the *Philosophy of Mind* concerns "a *second* nature *posited* by soul", but only with regard to the mind's possession of the body, not ethicality's possession of (individual) mind. For this reason, in the *Philosophy of Mind*, habit is "something not corresponding to free mind" (PG § 410Z [134]). In the *Philosophy of Right*, habit *does* correspond to "free mind".
- 15 For Hegel's own gloss on ancient virtue: "The ethical, in so far as it is reflected in the naturally determined character of the individual as such, is *virtue*," (PR § 150).
- 16 See Hegel's condemnation of the ethical place of the paterfamilias in Roman law (PR § 175A).
- 17 Subjectivity, *ironically* stands as an analogue to the natural will—something that is itself merely given, even as it (unlike the natural will) can rise above, and dispense with, every law and every content of consciousness (see PR §§ 5, 25, 140A [p. 182]).
- 18 Hegel uses this idea to formulate the ethical prohibition on incest (see PR § 168).

- 19 These aphorisms reinforce Hegel's guiding idea that "philosophy is *exploration of the rational*, it is for that very reason the *comprehension of the present and the actual*, not the setting up of a *world beyond* which exists God knows where" (PR Preface, 20). The central aphorism in the Preface is the famous "What is rational is actual; and what is actual is rational." It serves as a bulwark against the empty boast of possessing the good (the aphoristic progression beginning with "*Idou Rhodos, idou kai pēdēma* [Behold Rhodes, and jump here]) and instead directs us to the actual possession of the good always already available to us (the aphoristic conclusion of "*Here is the rose, dance here*") (PR Preface, 21–22). I discuss the meaning of these aphorisms in more detail in Joshua D. Goldstein, "Hegel and the Paradox of Democratic Education," *The European Legacy*, vol. 18, no. 3 (2013): 308–326. As H. S. Harris rightly points out, "[a]nyone who has been properly taught can dance anywhere; and anyone who has been properly educated can recognize the rose" (H. S. Harris, "How Philosophy 'Instructs the World,'" *Laval théologique et philosophique*, vol. 51 no. 2 (1995): 311–321, 313).
- 20 Hegel first sets out the free will's logical structure in which the will appears as moment of universalizing (PR § 5) and a moment of determination (PR § 6). However, its formal truth is the activity of a universality that sustains itself only as and through a moment of determination and vice versa—that is, its truth is the unity of these moments (PR § 7). Yet, when freedom is present not as a mere logical structure but as the actual structure of the world, universality is present as the empty form of subjectivity that lives, but is nonetheless "an unaccomplished end" (PR §§ 25, 24) in the face of an objective world of content that does not live but nonetheless has "external existence" (PR §§ 26, 25).
- 21 Elizabeth Brake, "Minimal Marriage: What Political Liberalism Implies for Marriage Law," *Ethics*, vol. 120 (2010): 302–337, 307.
- 22 Ibid. For how we might think through what a Hegelian metaphysics of marriage might require, see this chapter's conclusion.
- 23 See note 14 of this chapter.
- 24 G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, trans. W. Wallace and A. V. Miller; revised by M. J. Inwood. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). Cited by Section number: a "Z" indicates material from his *Zusatz* (addition), an "A" indicating material contained in his *Anmerkung* (remark). Where the *Zusatz* or *Anmerkung* is long, a page number is also provided.
- 25 See Hegel's discussion of "practical education" (PR § 197).
- 26 Where "rectitude" is the "simple adequacy" of "the naturally determined character of the individual" to "the duties of the circumstances to which he belongs" (PR § 150).
- 27 Hegel's clearest example of this is the industrialization of agriculture (PR § 203Z).
- 28 Of course, there are *physical and mental limits* to these universal tools, but a limit is not directionality any more than Socrates's *daimon* saying, "No," constitutes telling Socrates how to live.
- 29 I draw inspiration for this way of grasping the facticity of our sexual capacities from the so-called new natural law theory, for example, John Finnis, "Law, Morality, and 'Sexual Orientation,'" *Notre Dame Law Review*, vol. 69, no. 5 (1994): 1049–1076, 1066; Robert P. George and Gerard V. Bradley, "Marriage and the Liberal Imagination," *The Georgetown Law Journal*, vol. 84 (1995): 301–320, 301–302; Patrick Lee and Robert P. George, "What Sex Can Be: Self-Alienation, Illusion, or One-Flesh Union," *American Journal of Jurisprudence*, vol. 42 (1997): 135–157, 136–137. For my own work on how

- we ought to grasp the ethical significance of this facticity in contrast to the narrow and exclusionary sexual ethic of the new natural lawyers, see Joshua D. Goldstein "Rescuing New Natural Law Theory: From Absolute Values to a Theory of Autonomy," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 45, no. 2 (2012): 451–472; Joshua D. Goldstein, "New Natural Law Theory and the Grounds of Marriage: Friendship and Self-Constitution," *Social Theory and Practice*, vol. 37, no. 3 (2011): 461–482; and Joshua D. Goldstein, "Was It Good for You Too? The New Natural Law Theory and the Paradoxical Good of Sexbots," in John Danaher and Neil McArthur (eds.), *Robot Sex: Social and Ethical Implications*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017), 173–200.
- 30 For example, contrary to Augustine, *The Good of Marriage*, trans. Charles T. Wilcox in *Treatises on Marriage and Other Subjects*, ed. Roy J. Deferrari. (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1955), chs. 3(3), 6(6), although there are other goods of marriage that attend it (ch. 24(32)); and, Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles: Book 3: Providence, Part II*, trans. Vernon J. Bourke. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), ch. 122 [4]–[6], and John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), §§ 77–78.
- 31 For example, Milton's "meet help" (Milton, *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, e.g., ch. IX, XV).
- 32 Locke, *Second Treatise*, § 78 and Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, ch. 122 [6].
- 33 Augustine, *The Good of Marriage*, chs. 6 [6], 10 [11], and Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, eds. Peter Heath and J. B. Schneewind and trans. Peter Heath. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 27, 384.
- 34 This expressivism is already present in Locke's account of marriage as a contract whose content is determined by the spouses—with the exception of the requirement to have and tend to children (Locke, *Second Treatise*, §§ 81–83).
- 35 Compare Kant's sexual ethic with its continued employment of a distinction between *crimina carnis secundum naturam* and *crimina carnis contra naturam* (crimes of the body in accord with nature; crimes of the body against nature; Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, 27, 390).
- 36 For an excellent attempt to rethink the foundationally important dynamic toward identity of trans folk without returning to an essentialism, Nina Hagel, "Alternative Authenticities: Thinking Transgender Without Essence," *Theory & Event*, vol. 20, no. 3 (2017): 599–628.
- 37 Plutarch, "Solon." in *The Rise and Fall of Athens: Nine Greek Lives*, trans. Ian Scott-Kilvert. (New York: Penguin Books, 1960), 20, 62.



# 11 Tiger Stripes and Embodied Systems

## Hegel on Markets and Models

*David Kolb*

### Modern Societies

If Hegel walked the streets of today's Berlin, what would he make of modern Germany? A more unified German nation, check. Professional civil servants, check. Bicameral legislature, controls on the market and corporations, social welfare system, check. But no constitutional monarch, no estates general, not enough farmers, either really big wars or uncivilized small wars. A mixed result, he might conclude, but moving in the right direction for a modern nation.

Then, looking around, what would he say about the European Union? Fairly democratic and rational constitutions in its members, check. Good civil rights and social protections, check. Jealous sovereignties and lots of squabbles, check. Economic and forceful violence hovering in the background but maintaining an uneasy accommodation, check. The European Union is doing about as well as he had expected in the modern international scene.

Many Americans expected more from the European Union. They hoped it might turn into a United States of Europe. They presumed that American-style political institutions ought to be able to tame the national differences that keep the European Union fragile. Because, after all, they *know* that the United States is the first truly modern nation, leading the way to a new kind of society.

In the 1820s Hegel had declared that the United States was not a nation. Because of its open frontier, it hadn't yet been forced to turn in and confront itself as a unity. In the American dawn's early light the owl of Minerva couldn't fly.

### Clearing the Lumber Room

But Hegel also had said,

America is therefore the land of the future, where, in the ages that lie before us, the burden of the world history shall reveal itself—perhaps

in a contest between North and South America. It is a land of desire for all those who are weary of the historical lumber-room of old Europe. Napoleon is reported to have said: "*Cette vieille Europe m'ennuie.*" It is for America to abandon the ground on which hitherto the history of the world has developed itself.<sup>1</sup>

Could Hegel then be recruited by those who claim that the United States is indeed *the* uniquely modern nation, leading the way into a new future by clearing out the lumber room of old traditions, memories, rivalries, aristocracies and privileges?

In this vision, America applies the solvent of individual liberty to restrictive social roles, opening the field for free individuals to act on their own. In one story the free individual is the pioneer creating a new town, in another story the cowboy subduing untamed nature and unruly companions, or the loyal citizen battling oppressive institutions and powerful bosses.

To thoroughly clean out the lumber room a truly modern society must not later become another antique to be stored away. It must be a society that stays fresh, self-renewing, *modern* in the strongest sense of that word (which stems from a Latin word for *today*). It needs to be more than a change from one old regime to another. Like a bolt of lightning, it should divide history. The strongest claim would be that the new society has found the true essential form of social life, which can now be implemented in its purity free from historical incrustations.

This modernist dream appears from the Enlightenment through Nietzsche and Max Weber and on to today's proponents of the free economic rationality of the market. A market society of free individuals is not structured around any set of historical privileges or substantive values. Individuals are to be rational economic actors. Whether consumers or entrepreneurs, and preferably both at once, these autonomous individuals choose among possibilities guided by individual preferences within an overall market of needs and resources. Each person pursues his or her own welfare. No one exercises concern for the collective; the invisible hand will take care of what is common. This view provides an unusually austere version of the modernist dream. It is by no means the only version of that dream in America: Both John Wayne and John Dewey would reject it. But lately this version has become very influential, often under the not-too-positive label *neoliberalism*:

Neoliberalism is an old term, dating back to the 1930s, but it has been revived as a way of describing our current politics—or more precisely, the range of thought allowed by our politics . . . the ideal of society as a kind of universal market (and not, for example, a polis, a civil sphere or a kind of family) and of human beings as profit-and-loss calculators (and not bearers of grace, or of inalienable

rights and duties). . . . It was a way of reordering social reality, and of rethinking our status as individuals . . . we are now urged to think of ourselves as proprietors of our own talents and initiative, . . . a language formerly confined to chalkboard simplifications describing commodity markets (competition, perfect information, rational behaviour) has been applied to all of society, until it has invaded the grit of our personal lives, and how the attitude of the salesman has become enmeshed in all modes of self-expression.<sup>2</sup>

In such a global market society, substantive national and group identities become matters for personal choice.

### Hegel versus the Market Society

Hegel called a society organized around a free market plus a minimal government *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*. Literally translated his phrase is “the society of those living in cities.” In Anglophone discussions of Hegel’s ideas, his phrase *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* is commonly translated as “civil society.” However, more general Anglophone political philosophy and most social sciences use the term *civil society* with a different and almost opposite meaning, to refer to a network of participatory institutions such as bowling leagues, book groups, neighborhood improvement organizations and other voluntary groupings that bring individuals together in shared efforts for common goods, helping to buffer the raw necessities and demands of the market.

For Hegel such organizations embody a form of sociality that goes beyond any pure market society toward a more basic and encompassing way of life with shared common goals and values. So, rather than employ the term *civil society* in this chapter, I translate Hegel’s *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* as “market society.”

Hegel denied that a market society formed the essence of social life. Citizens, he argued, can never be reduced to purely rational individual economic agents. Shared common goals and identities are more fundamental. Modern freedoms do not reduce one’s national identity to a club one might choose not to join, where being British or Japanese might be something put on or taken off, as ceremonial garments are worn on special occasions but don’t affect one’s basic economic and political decisions. Loyalties and substantive shared goals transcend self-marketing.

To strengthen his point, Hegel today might note that now the European Union nations are trying to avoid splintering into smaller duchies for ethnic groups that refuse to reduce shared-group styles and common goals to a purely economic global identity. He might point out that even the United States now contains groups that refuse to melt down their divergent substantive values and historically shaped modes of life. This might lead him to conclude that rather than being a failed attempt to

create a United States of Europe; the fractious European Union shows the future for the United States of America.

### More than Markets

For Hegel, to see a modern society as based on the primacy of individual choice through market mechanisms is to fail to understand what a society is. Any attempt to realize such a society will reveal how a market society can only exist within a more encompassing substantive community.

In his *Phenomenology of Spirit* and elsewhere Hegel contends that the freely choosing individual is a social product. Far from being the foundation of society, the choices of free individuals are made possible by more fundamental levels of social interaction. Neither individual nor society dominates; each supports the other in a mutually productive relation.

Then, in his *Philosophy of Right* Hegel offers an internal critique of the ideal of a market society. In such a pure market, shared values and common projects appear in the growth of substantive associations among workers, and the supposedly minimal government soon must moderate and remedy the excesses of market capitalism. Based on his logical dialectic of universal, particular, and individual identities, he argues that such tensions and developments show how the market exists only within and through the fuller shared community that he calls *der Staat*. Capitalized translations of Hegel's German word as "the State" bring an unnecessary echo of twentieth-century totalitarianism, but Hegel might point to today's Holland or Sweden as examples of what he was proposing: liberal constitutions, a symbolic monarchy and a strong sense of national identity, with careful tending to both markets and social welfare.<sup>3</sup>

### New Defenses and New Attacks

Since Hegel's time many new proposals and defenses of the ideal of a market society have appeared. In particular, the science of economics has developed powerful techniques of mathematical modeling that are said to prove that a market society untrammelled by shared commitments can produce the most efficient welfare for all. These crystalline insights have allowed laissez-faire economics a new run.

Mathematical models promise a shaft of sunlight that illuminates the depths of economic decisions and banishes murky dialectical uncertainties. Predictably, those murky depths have reasserted themselves, as attacks on the use of mathematical models. One line of attack comes from behavioral economics, which sees the abstractions of the economic rational individual as out of touch with our evolved patterns for measuring risk and perceiving dangers and opportunities, honed by millennia of evolution.<sup>4</sup>

My plan in this chapter is to develop from Hegel a new argument against the possibility of a pure market society. After advancing that argument, I show how it can be extended to question the current reliance on mathematical models. I argue that just as no animal can be mobile without being both enabled and limited by its particular contingent type of mobility, so, too, no citizen can be rational or political without being enabled and limited by its particular contingent substantive identity. It is not an unfortunate evolutionary mistake that we do not act as pure economic beings. Rational choice, economic decisions, bureaucratic procedures, game theory strategies and the other actions of rational actors cannot be realized in their formally described purity. They will always be embodied within a particular substantive identity that focuses, enables and limits them.

### Being Outside

This argument begins with Hegel's conception of nature. Nature, for Hegel, is all outside. Forms and processes and laws that may be described in conceptual purity become real only when embodied in space and time, where their primary connections are external: one space next to another, one minute succeeding another. What I may describe as an internally related hierarchy of natural systems exists in reality as a set of entities scattered about in different locations and times and shapes.

In nature, things are not just outside the mind; *they have outsides*. They are plunked down amid other things not intrinsically connected to them. They have relations and vulnerabilities that are not included in any pure description of what it means to be a tiger, a piece of granite or even a local biosphere. There is always an outside, always the contingent other, the unexpected disease, the new competitor, the moving continent, the asteroid from the heavens

Recently, the DeepMind artificial intelligence (AI) that learned from repeated trials how to win at the game of Go was given the task of learning to walk. Clever programming defined the goal of the task, and then the AI was fed examples of successful and unsuccessful transits of obstacle courses. It learned from these examples—without being programmed in detail—how to maneuver a three-dimensional stick figure around simulated courses.<sup>5</sup> But DeepMind has not really learned to walk *outside*. It is maneuvering where all elements are predefined and controlled. To be outside is to be exposed to what is other and unpredictable. This may not matter if the AI is doing limited tasks in a limited environment, but it brings home the point that to be real outside in an external world is more than to follow a formula that specifies a limited number of internal and external variables. Thousands of extinct species testify that adaptation to a stable environment is not enough.

Most important, to fit into that outside world, a natural thing's essential structures need to be fleshed out with huge amounts of added contingent

detail. If the DeepMind AI were manipulating a physical robot rather than a screen image, that robot would have legs with a definite tensile strength, feet that could move this way but not that. Its equipment would not only allow it to move about outside but also limit what it was able to do there.

Hegel puts his point this way:

The contradiction of the Idea, arising from the fact that, as Nature, it is external to itself, is more precisely this: that on the one hand there is the necessity of its forms which is generated by the Concept, and their rational determination in the organic totality; while on the other hand, there is their indifferent contingency and indeterminable irregularity. In the sphere of Nature contingency and determination from without has its right, and this contingency is at its greatest in the realm of concrete individual forms. The immediately concrete thing is a group of properties, external to one another and more or less indifferently related to each other. For that very reason, the simple subjectivity which exists for itself is also indifferent and abandons them to contingent and external determination. This is the impotence of Nature, that it preserves the determinations of the Concept only abstractly, and leaves their detailed specification to external determination.<sup>6</sup>

The rock I use as a paperweight is not just heavy, but heavy with a particular weight, balance point and tensile strength, with a particular color and shape, location and texture. It could not exist without those contingent qualities.<sup>7</sup>

To be an animal, an organism has to possess essential systems that enable it to move about, obtain nutrition, reproduce, and so on. But an animal cannot just be “mobile.” The notion of mobility does not say whether the animal creeps or crawls or flies; whether it has legs or wings or fins or treads; how many appendages, their function, number, color, size; and so on. Its bones will have a certain strength. Its feet will be just so big and fitted with particular styles of claws or toes or pads. For the animal to move, all those contingent details need to be realized.

To be mobile is to be mobile in a particular way that gives the animal a purchase in the world, enabling motion of a specific kind in a specific environment. It's not that a tiger is mobile *and* has legs. It is mobile *through* having legs, just as it is colored *through* having stripes. Embodiment brings a particular substantive identity that both opens and limits possibilities.

This includes a repertory of defined skills, instincts, reactions and sensitivities that fit it into its environment. The animal, its bodily features, its skills and instincts and its environment (*Umwelt*) stand together in what Hegel calls an immediate unity.

## Turning Inward

But that immediate natural unity grows more complex. The tiger relates to its environment differently than does a piece of granite. The tiger acts to preserve its own identity. Hegel traces the growing ability of natural organisms to express in their actions a relation to their own existence. In the later sections of Hegel's philosophy of nature we find increasingly complex systems more and more able to act and react as whole individuals.

Then in the early sections of his philosophy of spirit this self-identity becomes by degrees more and more self-referential. If nature is the sphere of outsides and contingency, then spirit is the realm of insides and freedom. But at no stage is there a sudden liberation of a soul from a body. Instead, there are ever more self-related but still embodied processes.

## Freedom and Institutions

A crucial step is achieved when, with the appropriate social preconditions, individuals come to care for their own individual freedom. This brings new dilemmas, as political freedoms grow yet individuals remain frustrated by narrow possibilities. Young Hegel shared his generation's romantic longing for complete fulfillment in a fusion of freedom's deeper selfhood with nature's sturdy completion. But he became disillusioned with both Romantic longing (*Sehnsucht*) and Romantic ironic detachment. He strove to understand how a person's particular limited roles and finite meanings could be accepted as a fulfillment rather than a limitation.

In the introduction to his *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel says that

[t]he will contains ( $\alpha$ ) the element of pure indeterminacy or that pure reflection of the ego into itself which involves the dissipation of every restriction and every content either immediately presented by nature, by needs, desires, and impulses, or given and determined by any means whatever. This is the unrestricted infinity of absolute abstraction or universality, the pure thought of oneself.

( $\beta$ ) At the same time, the ego is also the transition from undifferentiated indeterminacy to the differentiation, determination, and positing of a determinacy as a content and object. Now further, this content may either be given by nature or engendered by the concept of mind. Through this positing of itself as something determinate, the ego steps in principle into determinate existence. This is the absolute moment, the finitude or particularization of the ego.

( $\gamma$ ) The will is the unity of both these moments. It is particularity reflected into itself and so brought back to universality, i.e. it is individuality. It is the self-determination of the ego, which means that at one and the same time the ego posits itself as its own negative, i.e. as



restricted and determinate, and yet remains by itself, i.e. in its self-identity and universality.<sup>8</sup>

This might seem just the sort of procedure that the proponents of pure economic rational agency would applaud. This free self pulls away from the external world, becoming an active potential that particularizes itself in any manner that it chooses. At the moment of freedom a self can choose rules and criteria for deciding among the options available. Pure economic maximization offers the advantage of leaving the self free to choose without substantive commitments or prior identities. Would not this be the triumph of spirit over nature?

This, however, is not at all what Hegel has in mind. When Hegel talks about negative self-withdrawal he is not describing a temporal process of decision. The three conceptual “moments” of the will are not describing a temporal sequence. They coexist together at the same time.

A self never exists as an indeterminate possibility; it is always being determined in some way in some concrete social setting. There is no actual moment where the self knows itself as a cloud of free potentiality. To Hegel, individuals or groups who try to actualize that pure freedom either become impotent Hindu mystics or destructive agents of Robespierre’s Terror.<sup>9</sup>

The second moment, determinate particularity, is always present, and the third moment describes, Hegel thinks, our concrete reality—but it is misunderstood. Our usual concept of free will oscillates uneasily between the first and second moments, forcing us to describe our situation as frustrated universality and/or oppressive particularity.

In order to understand the idea of freedom we must conceive universality and particularity affirmatively together. How can we be in a definite state while also being *more* than that particular identity? If we think the three aspects of freedom as immediately present qualities they seem to contradict one another. The true way to think them, Hegel believes, is as what he calls as a triple syllogistic unity, where each only exists as a way of holding together or mediating the other two. None is primary, and none immediately presents as a foundation for the others. Each exists as the intersection or the mediation of the others. In various societies, one or another aspect of this complexly interdependent process can be made more salient in particular sets of social institutions. In the final modern set of institutions, all the elements of freedom are to be explicitly posited and linked with the others so that no one of them is completely dominant.

These modern institutions grant recognized social roles to all the moments of freedom. A market society cannot do this because it is built on a sharp separation of universal and particular. Put in Hegel’s technical terms, in a market society the difference, but not the unity, of formally universal process and particular content has been posited in the institutions.<sup>10</sup>

Hegel thus mobilizes ideas from his logic about the relation of universal and particular, form and content to describe a set of institutions within which an individual modern self can both be aware that it is *more* than its current particular situation and yet feel at home in that situation.

No institution can eliminate occasional experiences of agonized freedom or imprisoned frustration, but the person living in a fully rational society can be confident that all the aspects of the process of self-determination have been active in the processes that legitimate and affirm through shared values the individual's larger life choices. This confidence provides a base level of self-contentment.

Hegel tries in his *Philosophy of Right* to describe such a set of institutions. He recommends shared identities and common goals within a representative republic with a symbolic monarch, professional civil servants, an extensive welfare system and controls on the market. The details of his recommendations may be questionable or dated, but his general point remains.

What is important for our inquiry in this chapter is that those modern institutions cannot exist as naked instantiations of their formal descriptions. Just as spiders and fish share common systems but realize them in contingently different embodiments, scales, furry legs, number of eyes and so on, so, too, will any modern state have distinctive geographical, historical and emotional qualities that will contingently enable (and limit) its institutions. So each modern nation will "do" bureaucracy, voting, bicameral legislatures and even "the market" in its own way.

Economic rationality and politics are realized in the outside world in and through contingent qualities that enable and limit them. So much detail has to be filled in for the pure process to become real. There is geography, history, background, habits built up over long periods, fundamental moods and styles of acting, typical patterns of thought and valuation. For Hegel these might be French or German or Catholic or Protestant or Chinese or Indian and so on.

It Hegel's discussion of history he talks much of *Volksgeister*; the term is often translated "national spirits," but a modern nation-state is only one of many kinds of groups with substantive contingent identities. Such talk frightens readers who remember all too well the twentieth-century attempts to enforce substantive values onto recalcitrant populations. Hegel would reply that it is a mistake to think, in Cold War terms, that we must choose between melting down our traditions into a global market society or submitting to a single authoritative identity. There is a third option, a multitude of societies each with its own substantive identity and shared goals guiding and limiting its market.

The immediate, given unity of the self and its social world appears in linked networks of practices, moods, habits and valuations, spreading in all directions and influencing every act performed within them. It is not just that the people have different preferences but that their style of

having preferences, their ways of dealing with preferences and making decisions also all become real within immense amounts of added detail and ongoing practical orientations and horizons.<sup>11</sup>

Hegel's studies of history are filled with examples of these group spirals. His analyses are insightful but weakened by stereotyping and lack of information. But these weaknesses do not weaken his general point that any institution will embody its formally described processes only in and through huge amounts of added contingent qualities which both enable and shape its activities.

## Hegel, Really?

My way of reading Hegel may sound too messy and empirical for the great absolute idealist who gathers all facts into a synoptic vision based on pure logic, and who ends his presentation of his system with a quote from Aristotle about thought thinking itself. But I am afraid that on this point Hegel does not live up to his reputation. Hegel argues in his logic for an a priori necessity that the realizations of spirit happen through non a priori, absolutely contingent factual details.<sup>12</sup>

Hegel's institutional recommendations for political and social structures occur at the end of his discussion of spirit realized objectively in the world. History and logic yield insight into the developmental pattern that has led to his proposed modern institutions for a free society, but the knowledge of the pattern does not provide a set of pure ahistorical social institutions.

It is tempting to picture Hegel or his followers as philosopher gods looking down at the gyrations of thought, matter and history below. But Hegel insists that spirit's motion can be grasped only through and in its embodied particularity. The self-comprehension of spirit is happening here and now, conducted in your and my languages, with contingent enablings and limitations. Absolute knowledge is a social possession, not an individual's moment of total insight. This is why Hegel teaches many courses rather than conducting a single mystical or aesthetic initiation after the manner of Schelling.

Hegel thinks that the average citizen cannot achieve philosophy's complex historical/ontological awareness. For them, the confidence being at home in a society that supports freedom will be delivered through art and religion rather than clear conceptual analysis. This is the rock on which the Hegelian inheritance shattered into conservative theorists and radical activists. Marx criticized Hegel's settling for contemplation in his famous eleventh thesis on Feuerbach: "Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it." Marx believed that when human consciousness came to understand the formal patterns of its own self-development through history it could embody them in a purely human and free social structure that would be brought

into being by the lightning strike of revolution. But, as Hegel might have foretold, such revolutionary formulas became real only in and through contingent histories and cultures of the target nations. There was no escape from contingency through the realization of a pure communist structure because that structure could never be realized in its purity. The same is true for a pure market, capitalist or not.

### Help from an Unlikely Source

While writing this chapter in tandem with another for a conference on Hegel and Wittgenstein, I discovered in Wittgenstein's *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* a parallel to Hegel's argument about pure structures. Discussing the nature of mathematical proof, Wittgenstein shows diagrams of simple machines. Consider a diagram of a seesaw: a lever with a weight on the far end and supported on a raised pivot in the middle. It's "obvious" that if you push down on the lever, the weight will rise.<sup>13</sup>

But is it so obvious? Perhaps the weight is too heavy and the lever breaks. Or the support in the middle collapses. Or the lever bends, or ties itself in knots, or the weight evaporates or the lever liquifies. It all depends on what the materials and the laws of nature happen to be. Wittgenstein comments,

When I see the picture of the mechanism in motion; that can tell me how a part actually will move. Though if the picture represented a mechanism whose parts were composed of very soft material (dough, say), and hence bent about in various ways in the picture then the picture would perhaps again not help in making a prediction.<sup>14</sup>

Now, replace the diagram of a machine with an outline of the steps for making a decision according to a rule of formal pure economic rationality, or a mathematical model of decision processes and their results. Or the procedure for the calculation of stakes in a game, or the formula for operating a bicameral legislature. Taken as defining a process, the steps in the outline are sure and clear. But as a description of an actual existing process, what will happen depends on the contingent qualities of the parts. Taken as defining a process, an outline or a diagram shows a physical machine with infinitely strong levers and gears that have no way of breaking, and the steps of a decision process show abstract persons acting in clear absolutely precise ways. But in a real instance of the process the gears may melt, and the humans who will realize the procedures will be French or German or belong to some tribe in Borneo. They will have their own culture and attitudes, language and values.

The notion of a purely rational economic actor is an idealized machine. The point is not that the purely rational machine may have contingent data to process, but that the actual workings of the machine will be realized through contingent embodiment which open and close off possibilities.

Now it should be clear how Hegel's argument applies to the recent reliance on mathematical economic models. It is not an aberrant result of evolution that we cannot act as those models say we should. No one can, because the models cannot be implemented in their purity. The necessary contingencies of embodiment are not simply decoration; they shape the horizon of real possibilities.

### A Last Objection

But granted those contingencies, should we not be able to back off, reflect on them and self-consciously alter them. Maybe we cannot do that all at once; Descartes and Robespierre could not succeed. But why not analyze what Hegel calls our immediate union with our social and natural world into sets of preferences, attitudes, and then into second-level preferences (preferences for ways of dealing with first order preferences) and so on? Then alter them one by one. Rely on one part of life while revising another: "We are like sailors who have to rebuild their ship on the open sea, without ever being able to dismantle it in dry-dock and reconstruct it from its best components."<sup>15</sup>

This seems plausible; we do it all the time . . . Or do we? Neurath's ship is another idealized diagram of a pure process. For where is the ship going? A real ship travels with a mission. If Neurath's ship were traveling *solely for the purpose of being refitted en route*, its crew would have no way to know how to rebuild it. Once we add a contingent purpose and other details, revisions can be imagined and evaluated.

But surely the goal of the voyage can also be reflected upon and changed? True, but what guides that new self-reflection? Either we will face an infinite regress of questions about criteria, or we will accept Hegel's claim about immediately given contingency.<sup>16</sup>

What makes us modern is not that we are self-aware; artists and thinkers have been so throughout history. What's new is creating institutions that legitimate and potentiate that self-reflection and change. That helps clear the lumber room, but in fact, active self-reflection and self-correction can themselves be made real only as contingently embodied. We can, indeed, take up and examine any of the contingencies of our geography, mood, values, projects and so on. But we cannot do so pure and naked.

### Substance and Conflict

Once we understand the unavoidable role of contingent embodiments, we see that Hegel had good reason to oppose the idea of a global market society. We see the impossibility of melting away (or commodifying) all substantive identity and leaving only pure rational individual actors making social compacts.

Hegel would indeed take the current problems of the European Union as what we should expect. Hegel's insistence on the necessity of

contingent community spirits means that at all levels communities will have inherent differences of approach and mood and interests. They can rationally “get along,” but there’s no automatic reconciliation and no way of banishing the permanent possibility of conflict. Hegel’s refuses Kant’s universal peace because he sees no way for a purely formal global identity to become a concrete identity that all nations can share. That is why the fragile European Union is a better emblem of the future than any supposed market society in the United States.

## Notes

- 1 G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (1884). (New York: Dover, 1956), 86–7.
- 2 “Neoliberalism: The Idea That Swallowed the World,” *The Guardian*, August 18, 2017, [www.theguardian.com/news/2017/aug/18/neoliberalism-the-idea-that-changed-the-world](http://www.theguardian.com/news/2017/aug/18/neoliberalism-the-idea-that-changed-the-world).
- 3 See David Kolb, *The Critique of Pure Modernity: Hegel, Heidegger, and After*. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987). Hegel’s argument rests on the analyses in his logic/ontology/metaphysics. For a critique of readings of Hegel’s social and political ideas that try to bypass his logic and ontology, see David Kolb, “Beyond the Pale: The Spectre of Formal Universality,” *The Owl of Minerva*, vol. 36, no. 1 (2003–04): 15–30.
- 4 See, for instance, Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, *Choices, Values, And Frames*. (London: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Daniel Kahneman and Paul Slovic, *Judgment Under Uncertainty Heuristics and Biases*. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow*. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013).
- 5 See “Producing Flexible Behaviours in Simulated Environments,” <https://deepmind.com/blog/producing-flexible-behaviours-simulated-environments/>.
- 6 G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel’s Philosophy of Nature*, trans. A. V. Miller. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), par. 250.
- 7 Our concepts of things may have complex internal relationships, but they have no outsides. The concept of lion and the concept of tiger are internally related but they are not 10 or 20 meters apart. Real cats are a certain distance from one another, have colors and smells and might not get along. Medieval Aristotelians argued that forms such as *the human* or *the feline* could be embodied in multiple copies of the same entity only if they were combined with divided matter that was already affected by other forms, so that the resulting human or cat would have a particular shape, color, facial expressiveness, character and so on. Hegel does not accept that hylomorphism, but he agrees for his own reasons that a form or system’s realization must happen in and through myriad contingent details.
- 8 G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox. (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), pars 5–7.
- 9 Hegel adds, “In Paragraph 5, it is only one side of the will which is described, namely this unrestricted possibility of abstraction from every determinate state of mind which I may find in myself or which I may have set up in myself, my flight from every content as from a restriction. When the will’s self-determination consists in this alone, or when representative thinking regards this side by itself as freedom and clings fast to it, then

we have negative freedom, or freedom as the Understanding conceives it. This is the freedom of the void which rises to a passion and takes shape in the world; while still remaining theoretical, it takes shape in religion as the Hindu fanaticism of pure contemplation, but when it turns to actual practice, it takes shape in religion and politics alike as the fanaticism of destruction—the destruction of the whole subsisting social order—as the elimination of individuals who are objects of suspicion to any social order, and the annihilation of any organization which tries to rise anew from the ruins. Only in destroying something does this negative will possess the feeling of itself as existent. Of course, it imagines that it is willing some positive state of affairs, such as universal equality or universal religious life, but in fact, it does not will that this shall be positively actualized, and for this reason: Such actuality leads at once to some sort of order, to a particularization of organizations and individuals alike; while it is precisely out of the annihilation of particularity and objective characterization that the self-consciousness of this negative freedom proceeds. Consequently, what negative freedom intends to will can never be anything in itself but an abstract idea, and giving effect to this idea can only be the fury of destruction” (G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox. (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), par 5, *Zusatz*).

- 10 Hegel describes a market society as “an association of members as self-sufficient individuals in a universality which because of their self-sufficiency is only formal” (G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox. (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), par. 157).
- 11 For provocative examples of such differences, see Joseph Henrich, Robert Boyd, Samuel Bowles, Colin Camerer, Ernst Fehr, Herbert Gintis, Richard McElreath. “In Search of Homo Economicus: Behavioral Experiments in 15 Small-Scale Societies,” *AEA Papers and Proceedings*, 2001: 73ff.
- 12 For a clear presentation of Hegel’s arguments for this claim, see Stephen Houlgate, “Necessity and Contingency in Hegel’s Science of Logic,” *The Owl of Minerva*, vol. 27, no. 1 (1995): 37–49.
- 13 Wittgenstein’s actual diagrams are more complex than my description of the seesaw. His involve a long lever attached to a point on the circumference of a wheel. The lever rests on a pivot point some distance along its length. Looking at the diagrams, it seems obvious that if the wheel rotates, the end of the lever attached to its circumference will be pulled around and a chosen point further down the lever will follow a certain path in space depending on the location of the pivot.
- 14 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe. (Oxford: Blackwells, 1967), 123. See also pages 119–120, 195. For a thorough examination of the distinction Wittgenstein is making between two ways of reading the diagrams, see Jakub Mácha, *Wittgenstein on Internal and External Relations Tracing all the Connections*. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).
- 15 Otto Neurath, “‘Sociology in the Framework of Physicalism,’” in R. S. Cohen and M. Neurath (eds.), *Philosophical Papers 1913–1946* (1932) (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1983), 58–90. At issue is the interconnection of the boards forming the hull of the ship. Our web of belief and practice is not composed of individual planks that can be isolated, tested and replaced one at a time. Elaborate networks of inference and pragmatic relations tie the boards of the ship together in unexpected ways. In fact, when Neurath wrote of the ship in 1932 he was making that point against Carnapian protocol sentences. This point is



more familiar these days as the Quine-Duhem thesis and Sellarsian inferential network semantics.

- 16 Or Wittgenstein's point that the game of providing explanation and criteria has to stop at some level where it reaches particular social practices that we just do. Those social practices are part of our contingent embodiment. See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1969).

# 12 Hegel and the End of a Particular Historical Development

*Matthew J. Smetona*

Die Verwertung der Traumelemente beim Erwachen ist der Schulfall des dialektischen Denkens. Daher ist das dialektische Denken das Organ des geschichtlichen Aufwachens. Jede Epoche träumt ja nicht nur die nächste sondern träumend drängt sie auf das Erwachen hin. Sie trägt ihr Ende in sich und entfaltet es—wie schon Hegel erkannt hat—mit List. Mit der Erschütterung der Warenwirtschaft beginnen wir, die Monumente der Bourgeoisie als Ruinen zu erkennen noch ehe sie zerfallen sind.

—Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk*<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

In considerations of Hegel's political philosophy, the question of history implicitly determines how that philosophy will be characterized. In understanding his own philosophical system as completing Kant's transcendental project, Hegel appears to indicate that his system represents a completion that is more general in character. This idea is presumed by a number of his subsequent readers in the nineteenth century, including Friedrich Engels, as expressed in his *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*,<sup>2</sup> and Friedrich Nietzsche, as expressed in his *Untimely Meditations*.<sup>3</sup> Hegel's political philosophy, as articulated in the third volume of his *Encyclopedia* and as extended in his *Philosophy of Right* and associated lectures, seeks to make explicit the implicit rationality of the modern state form. The question of whether this project is meant to indicate such a general completion or end is *the* question of his political philosophy: Does the modern constitutional state, with its corresponding institutions of bourgeois society and the nuclear family, represent for Hegel the final and complete social and political formation, for the reason that it is the *only* such formation capable of actualizing the concept of freedom?

The idea that Hegel viewed history as having ended, or at least as having begun the process of ending, culminating in the social and political institutions of bourgeois modernity, with no possibility of subsequent development beyond them, an idea that is appropriated from Jean Wahl

and Alexandre Koyré by Alexandre Kojève and popularized by Allan Bloom and Francis Fukuyama, implicitly guides, despite its obvious problems, a certain strand of contemporary scholarship on Hegel's political philosophy that reads him as offering a defense of liberal (i.e., capitalist) society, despite his acknowledgment of its intractably contradictory character.

Nevertheless, another strand of Hegel scholarship, existing alongside the former strand, challenges and, in the view of this author, effectively refutes this premise. This chapter is situated within this latter strand, for reasons that will be articulated below. In the French context, Hypolite's monumental *Genèse et structure de la Phénoménologie de l'esprit de Hegel* represents one of the earliest works offering a careful reading of the *Phenomenology of Mind*<sup>4</sup> and therewith correcting for the misleading image of the text inspired by Kojève's lectures.<sup>5</sup> Another set of key figures in the French Hegel scholarship situated within this strand is Pierre-Jean Laarrière and Gwendoline Jarczyk. Both their *Les premiers combats de la reconnaissance* and their more recent *De Kojève à Hegel: 150 ans de pensée hégélienne en France* offer devastating critiques of Kojève's reading.<sup>6</sup> In the German context, the strong interest among a range of key figures in the Hegel scholarship (e.g., Axel Honneth, Ludwig Siep, Andreas Wildt and Jürgen Habermas)<sup>7</sup> on the role played by recognition in Hegel's pre-*Phenomenology* Jena manuscripts can be understood as representing an attempt to excavate a wide range of critical-theoretical insights from Hegel in ways that seek to avoid the problems of Kojève's reading. An exceptional work within this context is a 1993 article by Otto Pöggeler in *Hegel-Studien*, which concisely and incisively articulates the fundamental incompatibility between Kojève's reading and Hegel's philosophy.<sup>8</sup>

In the Anglo-American context, the path-breaking monograph setting the record straight on the *Phenomenology* is Robert B. Pippin's *Hegel's Idealism*.<sup>9</sup> Other key contributions regarding this text have been made by Terry Pinkard and Jon Stewart.<sup>10</sup> In terms of dispensing with the notion of the end of history in Hegel, no text is more important than the 1996 *Hegel Myths and Legends* volume edited by Jon Stewart.<sup>11</sup> Contributions to that volume by Philip T. Grier, Reinhart Klemens Maurer, and H. S. Harris are all devoted to dispelling the myth of the end of history, though their foci differ in terms of emphasis. While Grier and Harris focus on Fukuyama's uncritical acceptance of the notion that Kojève's reading of Hegel is accurate, Maurer identifies several possible meanings of the "end of history" thesis and considers whether any of them can reasonably be attributed to Hegel (they cannot).

Robert B. Pippin offers his most explicit statement on Kojève's reading in his collection of essays titled *Idealism as Modernism: Hegelian Variations*. In his analysis of the debate between Kojève and Leo Strauss, he describes the former's reading of Hegel as representing "truncated and

unsatisfactory jumbings of Hegelian ideas that get a better reading in the original.”<sup>12</sup>

His more recent *Hegel's Practical Philosophy* explains how that philosophy can be read in terms of Robert Brandom's project in *Making It Explicit* and elsewhere, a truly path-breaking project of combining an inferentialist semantics and a normative pragmatics that can be traced back just as much to Hegel as it can to Sellars.<sup>13</sup> Pippin's Brandomian Hegel understands freedom in terms of rational agency, and this rational agency is, in turn, understood in terms of a social practice of giving and asking for reasons, a practical activity requiring that persons mutually recognize one another *as* persons. The *political* question of history raised by Hegel's claim to the objective rationality of the institutions depicted in the *Philosophy of Right* is first raised by Pippin as an aside to be addressed later in his work: “Whether they [the institutions] can be said, on Hegel's own premises, to embody a final or complete moment is an issue I address briefly,” Pippin explains in his concluding remarks.

He nevertheless uses this aside to launch a political attack on Marx:

The account and justification of that claim to genuine education and so moral progress can be given, but only ‘at dusk,’ never in a way that legislates what ‘ought to be done’ . . . The point of philosophy for Hegel is to comprehend the world, not to change it; and this for a simple reason that Marx never properly understood: it can't.<sup>14</sup>

This attack, representing a kind of response to Allen W. Wood's evaluation of the divergence between Hegel and Marx on this issue,<sup>15</sup> is puzzling for two reasons. First, Marx's “philosophy” (he would reject this characterization of his work in favor of *critique*) was quite obviously capable of changing the world, for his identification of the dynamics of capitalist exploitation clearly legislated, in a historical sense, and continues to legislate, in the contemporary world, what “ought to be done.” Second, Hegel's own understanding of concepts as holistically inter-related requires that comprehension and change be understood in dialectical terms: A true comprehension of the world at any time cannot be separated from the eventual and inevitable changing of that world. Hegel's own prescience in identifying the intractable character of the contradictions of capitalist society cannot be separated from not only the conceptualization of society *beyond* that social formation but also the *inauguration* of that transformation.<sup>16</sup>

At any rate, Pippin's addressing of the political question he poses earlier (the question of whether the institutions depicted in the *Philosophy of Right* represent, “on Hegel's own premises,” “a final or complete moment”), while expressed somewhat circuitously, nevertheless comports with the thesis offered here (though there are reasons to believe that he

would take exception with the reasons offered here for that thesis). First, he claims that “[o]bjectively, . . . such an embodied and social conception of rationality can only get a grip within, at the particular moment, the basic institutions of bourgeois modernity.”<sup>17</sup> This “at the particular moment” condition leaves the door open to the future actualization of rationality—the embodied and social conception of rationality of Hegel’s that Pippin is primarily concerned with articulating—in institutions other than those depicted in the *Philosophy of Right*.

Pippin further articulates this “open-door” reading of Hegel in his explanation of the form any extension of Hegel’s analysis would necessarily take:

We might be able to demonstrate some claim that, given the context created by human attempts to justify themselves to one another, one set of alternatives has its historical home in such a context, and others do not, cannot (could not simply make much sense in such a context).<sup>18</sup>

Again, we are confronted with Pippin’s guarded language and circuitous route, but here he presents the form any extension of Hegel’s analysis must take—and, thus, by extension, that analysis itself—in unambiguously *retrospective* and *contextualized* terms. Pippin’s argument is thus limited to the position that, for Hegel, the state and its corresponding institutions can be said to be rational only at the particular historical moment at which he is writing.

If this argument is interpreted in *weak* terms, then nothing precludes the possibility that the rationality of that institutional constellation *could* expire. If it is interpreted in *strong* terms, then that rationality necessarily *will* expire. Pippin, in a number of his writings, has repeatedly expressed his commitment to the position that for Hegel *rationality is historical*, an attribution for which he has been criticized by Alan Patten.<sup>19</sup> Given Pippin’s commitment to this thesis of historically-determined rationality, one that is foundational to his *Hegel’s Practical Philosophy*, it seems that we can infer his commitment to the *strong* form of the argument.

This caution Pippin displays is praiseworthy, for it reflects the crucial fact that Hegel never claimed to have brought about the end of either the history of philosophy or history itself. Such claims are incompatible with Hegel’s explicit commitment to a conception of philosophy as nothing more than a *retrospective* mediation on preceding forms of thought. Pippin strongly emphasizes the limitations at work in this conception of philosophy, and this conception illumines for contemporary readers the spuriousness of Kojève’s claim that “Hegel was able to bring the history of philosophy (and, hence, history in general) to an end and to initiate the era of wisdom . . . in identifying the Concept and Time.”<sup>20</sup>

Most recently, Eric Michael Dale reads Hegel in Aristotelian and Christian terms that I disagree with for reasons that I do not have the space to

articulate here. He situates his understanding of the end of history thesis in Hegel in relation to the historical philosophies of Herder and Fichte. His claim that “[t]he Hegelian end is the culmination of the *now*; not the foreclosure of the *next*”<sup>21</sup> is one with which I agree for reasons that are articulated in the following.

### Kojève, the *Phenomenology of Mind*, and the *Science of Logic*

Kojève’s central interpretive thesis about Hegel’s philosophy, which he believes he can deduce from a reading of the 1807 *Phenomenology*, is located in the section encompassing the complete text of the sixth through eighth lectures of the academic year 1938–1939, titled *A Note on Eternity, Time, and the Concept* in the English translation.

It must first be noted that, as a consequence of his abandonment of the *Phenomenology of Mind* as both the “introduction” and the “first part” of his philosophical system, Hegel’s philosophical system, in fact, begins with the *Science of Logic*.<sup>22</sup> This abandonment, clearly representing a fundamental problem for the conclusions Kojève draws from his reading of the former text, is an issue which he does not address. One might note in response that Hegel never abandoned his understanding of the *Phenomenology* as the “deduction” of the standpoint of science, as evidenced by his retention of the following statement in the 1832 revision of the first book of the *Science Logic*: “The Concept of pure science and its deduction is presupposed in the present work insofar as the *Phenomenology of Mind* is nothing other than the deduction of it.”<sup>23</sup> It might be argued on this basis, then, that talk of Hegel’s philosophical system and its true beginning should be about the *Phenomenology*, rather than the *Science of Logic*, because the latter presupposes the former. It is, of course, true that the *Science of Logic* is the demonstrated result of the *Phenomenology of Mind*. Hegel explains:

In the *Phenomenology of Mind*, I have exhibited consciousness in its movement onwards from the first immediate opposition of itself and the object to absolute knowing. The path of this movement goes through every form of the relation of consciousness to the object and has the Concept of science for its result.<sup>24</sup>

But the very notion that the *Phenomenology* is the “demonstration” of anything at all is contradicted by Hegel’s explanation that its phenomenological development, which finds its completion in the Concept of science, presupposes the *Science of Logic*:

I have tried to expound consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Mind*. Consciousness is mind as a concrete knowing, a knowing too, in which externality is involved; but the development of this object,

like the development of all natural and spiritual life, rests solely on the nature of the pure essentialities which constitute the content of logic.<sup>25</sup>

The function of the *Phenomenology* is “[t]o help bring philosophy closer to the form of science”<sup>26</sup> because, it is explained, “the true shape of truth is scientific” and “truth has only the Concept as the element of its existence.”<sup>27</sup> “Science” is, of course, the *Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopedia* system based on that logic. In the strictest sense, however, it is the *Science of Logic* alone. At any rate, in the following passage, Kojève provides the most condensed statement of his thesis about Hegel, and this statement is presented as based on the latter’s dialectical logic and idealist metaphysics:

‘*Alles endliche ist dies, sich selbst aufzuheben,*’ Hegel says in the *Encyclopaedia*. It is only *finite* Being that dialectically overcomes itself. If, then, the Concept is Time, that is, if conceptual understanding is *dialectical*, the existence of the Concept—and consequently of Being revealed by the Concept—is essentially *finite*. Therefore History itself must be essentially finite; collective Man (humanity) must die just as the human individual dies; universal History must have a definite *end*.<sup>28</sup>

Let us first consider the quotation from §81 of the *Encyclopedia Logic*. The most recent English translation of the text renders this passage in the following way: “That is what everything finite is: its own sublation.”<sup>29</sup> Kojève takes this sentence to be the philosophical foundation for the claim that history must end, but in fact, it refers to Hegel’s commitment to the idealist position that every individual object or thought-content, if dialectically thought through, is revealed *not* to be independent of or external to thought itself. Rather, *any* such object is necessarily determined to be merely a finite “moment” in the dialectical movement of thought itself. So if everything finite is its own sublation, the idealist metaphysics of Hegel’s logic indicate that everything that *is*, is finite.

Thought begins with the “sheer immediacy” of being, but this is not a determinate thought activity: It is “empty thinking.”<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, Hegel explains that the thought of immediate being is “determined as indeterminate.”<sup>31</sup> It is the *thought* of being with which the *Science of Logic* begins, rather than being itself. Thought establishes immediate being as such, and so there is no truth (in-itselfness or self-subsistence) to the object of being. As thought changes its thinking of the object, the object itself changes from being to existence to actuality to objectivity.

Moreover, the immediacy of the thought of immediate being with which the *Science of Logic* begins is revealed in the completion of that text to be the sublation of an antecedent mediation by the Concept itself.



Thus, contra Kojève, thought *endlessly* opposes itself (reflects into otherness) and returns to itself (reflects into itself). Its opposition to itself is its mediation, while its immediacy is in any case its mediation of its mediation, or its return to itself. The “sheer immediacy” of immediate being is therefore the *consequent* of thought’s reflection: It is thought’s reflection into *itself*. But the problem is that it does not necessarily follow from this that thought possesses *self*-knowledge of this fact, and so the task of the *Science of Logic* is for thought to make explicit for itself what it is implicitly, that is, the object of its own cognition. Hegel explains this conclusion in the following passage:

Now as this determinateness is the proximate truth of the indeterminate beginning, it condemns the latter as something imperfect, as well as the method itself that, in starting from that beginning, was merely formal. This can be expressed as the now specific demand that the beginning, since it is itself a determinate relatively to the determinateness of the result, shall be taken not as an immediate but as something mediated and deduced.<sup>32</sup>

Immediate being is *deduced from* the Concept. The significance of this should not be understated. The objective world we as subjects confront and presuppose to be immediately determinate, if thought through to its completion (i.e., to its final presupposition), is revealed to be the unity of thought in and through which any activity of thinking occurs. It is the constituted reflection of the Concept in and through which all objects of cognition are constituted and comprehended. The *Science of Logic* takes the reader from the moment in which the totality of the objective world is presupposed to be unconstituted by the thinking of that world to the moment in which that totality is revealed to be constituted by the thinking of it.

Thus, according to Hegel there is no independently “real” or ontological represented to which any a priori representation could be said to correspond. He demonstrates the incoherence of the unknowable thing-in-itself, not by arguing for the possibility of knowledge of things as they are in-themselves external to thought, but rather by attacking the very notion of “externality” on which that concept is based. Thought is a priori constitutive of any object of its cognition, but it is not until the final moment of the logic that thought makes explicit for itself this constituting activity that is implicit for it in each of its preceding moments. Thus, Hegel’s argument is that any determination by thought of an object is its determination of itself, for thought thinks only itself and is to itself its own object. Thought thinks itself and is to itself its own object because it is demonstrated in the completion of the *Science of Logic* that there can be no independent object external to thought. *There is only thought*. The

following notations by Hegel in the *Zusatz* to §28 of the *Encyclopedia Logic* are therefore instructive:

[T]hought is with itself, it relates itself to itself, and has itself for its object. (*Das Denken aber ist bei sich selbst, verhält sich zu sich selbst und hat sich selbst zum Gegenstand*).

Thought thinks itself, it has an object that is at the same time no object. (*Denkt das Denken sich selbst, so hat es einen Gegenstand, der zugleich keiner ist*).

The moment of the realization of this truth, or the moment in which the subjective Concept unites itself with its object as determined and constituted by itself, is the Idea. This is the moment in which thought abandons its “presupposition” that the objective world exists “as something already there” and “posit[s] the object as determined by the Concept.”<sup>33</sup> It is the identity of the totalities of thought as cognition and thought as object. The other of thought is thought itself, and so its state of being with itself in an other is identical to its state of being with itself. Thought posits any object to which it relates itself, and thus all that appears to be *unendlich* is revealed through the sublating activity of thought to be, in fact, *endlich*. Thus, the quotation on which Kojève’s argument is based does not, in fact, indicate in conditional terms that “only” finite being overcomes itself. Rather, the lesson of Hegel’s philosophy is that the only “being” or existence that there is, is finite, or is constituted by thought in all of its determinations.

It is for this reason that the Objective Logic begins with the object of being (*Sein*) and finds its completion in actuality (*Wirklichkeit*), or the object as constituted by thought all the way down, thus inaugurating the transition to the Subjective Logic or the Doctrine of the Concept. In no way, however, does this imply that the dialectical character of conceptual understanding ever ceases. In fact, in the completion of the Subjective Logic in the absolute Idea, Hegel reveals not only that the entire content of the *Science of Logic* has been nothing more than the movement of the Concept, but also, and most important for us, that the structure of that *Logic* is circular. This circularity indicates that the development of thought, and therewith of the “existence” that corresponds to that thinking, does not end; it does not take a final form, for if thought endlessly opposes and returns to itself, then the thought-object to which that thought corresponds endlessly takes corresponding forms. From this view, the *only* conclusion to be drawn from the *Science of Logic*, and therewith of Hegel’s system in the most general sense, is the following, as expressed by Béatrice Longuenesse: “[T]he world appears and is thought by virtue of an activity of thought that takes root in a process that is both natural and historical.”<sup>34</sup> There is no indication either in Hegel’s *Logic* itself or in Longuenesse’s brilliant reading of it that the historicity in and through which that activity of thought takes place ever ceases.

Let us return to the Idea. It is the identity of the totalities of thought and object. It is therefore the resolution of the Objective Logic and the Subjective Logic. Nevertheless, it is to be recalled that the object is in any case the object *as thought*, and so the identity of thought and object is the identity of thought and thought. Importantly for our purposes, the antinomial opposition between thought and itself in its logical movement of opposing itself and returning to itself does not cease in its final identity with itself in the absolute Idea. Indeed, Hegel explains that it “contains within itself the highest degree of opposition.”<sup>35</sup> While this Idea is the mediated identity of its terms, *it is also itself this movement*: “The identity of the Idea with itself is one with the process.”<sup>36</sup> There is no indication given that this process which culminates in the absolute Idea, and which is itself this process, ever ceases, and this fact directly contradicts Kojève’s thesis.

We must now consider Hegel’s introduction of his dialectical conception of rational cognition as the “absolute method,” the method that determines the *Science of Logic* in its entirety. Consider the following:

In the absolute method, the Concept maintains itself in its otherness, the universal in its particularization, in judgment and reality; at each stage of its further determination it raises the entire mass of its preceding content, and by its dialectical advance it not only does not lose anything or leave anything behind, but carries along with it all it has gained, and inwardly enriches and consolidates itself.<sup>37</sup>

This description of the “absolute method” indicates that for Hegel the process of thought’s activity is progressive in character, as evidenced by his use of the term *advance* (*Fortgehen*) in the preceding passage, but this progress in terms of each stage of the logical movement from being to existence to actuality to objectivity (i.e., the movement depicted in the *Science of Logic*) must be understood in terms of the circularity of that logical movement as a whole:

The method is the pure Concept that relates itself only to itself; it is therefore the simple self-relation that is being. But now it is also fulfilled being, the Concept that comprehends itself, being as the concrete and also absolutely intensive totality.<sup>38</sup>

A parallel might be observed here between these two commitments of Hegel and the arguments of Thomas Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* for (1) the *cumulative* (progressive) character of normal science (the research conducted under the auspices of a paradigm, that is, the scientific inquiry that takes for granted the assumptions and commitments of a paradigm), and (2) the *relativistic* character of scientific revolutions (the replacement of one paradigm with another that is necessarily

incompatible and even incommensurable with the one which precedes it). As Kuhn explains,

[t]he developmental process described in this essay has been a process of evolution *from* primitive beginnings—a process whose successive stages are characterized by an increasingly detailed and refined understanding of nature. But nothing has been or will be said makes it a process of evolution *toward* anything.<sup>39</sup>

At any rate, it is this return from the absolute Idea to the original determination of immediate being *as* the identity of thought with itself that constitutes the text's repetition. The final realization on the part of thought in the *Science of Logic* is that it thinks only itself. This realization is stated in terms of the retrospective determination that "there is no longer any immediate determination that is not equality posited and itself Concept,"<sup>40</sup> and it is with this, Hegel explains, that "the science of logic has grasped its own concept."<sup>41</sup>

Here one might appeal to Kojève's notation above that "Being revealed by the Concept . . . is essentially finite." This statement would be accurate if *finite* were understood as Hegel understood it, as thought rather than object. But the "Therefore" in the first clause of the sentence which follows it ("Therefore History itself must be essentially finite") indicates that Kojève understands *endlich* purely in conventional, temporal terms. This understanding reduces logic to history in a way that is clearly appropriated from Koyré but that is unrepresentative of Hegel's system as the extension and completion of Kant's transcendental project, that is, as the a priori reconstruction of the conceptual conditions of possibility for any object of cognition to be an object at all. The final such condition is the Concept, or rather, in its final form, the Idea, as the mediated identity of the totalities of thought as cognition and thought as object, or of thought and object *as thought*. This determinate concept is presupposed in any thinking of any object at all.

Kojève is correct, of course, in claiming that "conceptual understanding is *dialectical*," according to Hegel. But can this perfectly reasonable and even banal attribution simply be identified with the controversial and unestablished assertion that, for Hegel, "the Concept is Time"? An answer to this question must begin with Hegel's rejection of Kant's argument in the first *Critique* that thought cannot deduce a priori its own objectivity or that "existence cannot be extracted from the Concept."<sup>42</sup> For Hegel, in contrast, the Concept is indeterminate only insofar as it has not yet sublated the mediation that constitutes its subjective movement. As Hegel explains,

[t]his pure Concept passes through the finite forms of the judgment and syllogism because it is not yet posited as in its own nature

explicitly one with objectivity but is grasped only in its process of becoming it.<sup>43</sup>

In this same section of the text, objectivity is defined by Hegel as “the immediacy to which the Concept determines itself by the sublation of its abstraction and mediation.”<sup>44</sup> This objectivity to which the subjective Concept relates itself is sublated and converted by its cognitive activity into a positedness, such that “the objective world is the ideality in which it [the Concept] cognizes itself.”<sup>45</sup> This activity of the Concept as determining itself (self-determining) in its relation to its object is essential to Hegel’s definition of the Concept itself. As he explains, “the Concept is therefore essentially this: to be distinct as an explicit identity from its implicit objectivity, and thereby to possess externality, yet in this external totality to be the totality’s self-determining identity.”<sup>46</sup> This moment of the Idea, in which the subjective Concept unites itself with its object as determined by itself, is thus “finite” in the sense that Hegel uses that term. That is to say, it is thought rather than being or existence or any of the other ontological terms that Kojève employs in describing Hegel’s project.

This ontological relativism is apparent in Hegel’s various notations that “the logical Idea has itself as the infinite form for its content,” “the absolute Idea itself has for its content merely this, that the form determination is its own completed totality, the pure Concept,” and “determinateness does not have the shape of a content, but exists wholly as form.”<sup>47</sup> The object and content of thought are revealed in the completion of the *Science of Logic* to be its own logical form.

Any evaluation of Kojève’s claim about history ending for Hegel requires reference to the relation in his philosophical system between logic and *Geist* (mind or spirit). The principle of the *Logic*, that the object and content of thought is its own logical form, is also true of mind, for the reason that the latter is nothing more than the actualization (*Verwirklichung*) of the former. Hegel claims the following about the form and content of mind (*Geist*), that is, logical thought as actualized, in the *Encyclopedia Philosophy of Mind*:<sup>48</sup>

The manifestation of [mind] itself to itself is therefore itself the content of mind and not, as it were, only a form externally added to the content; consequently mind, by its manifestation, does not manifest a content different from its form, but manifests its form which expresses the entire content of mind, namely, its self-manifestation. In mind, therefore, form and content are identical with each other . . . [I]n speculative logic it is demonstrated that . . . the form must be grasped not merely as something dependent on and external to the content, but rather as that which makes the content into a content . . . [T]he true form is its own content.<sup>49</sup>

Hegel notes further in the *Encyclopedia* that “[m]ind is the actualized Concept which is for itself and has itself for object,”<sup>50</sup> and he explains concisely in the *Philosophy of Right* that “[m]ind is thought in general.”<sup>51</sup>

Many commentators have referred to Hegel’s logic as “pure thought thinking itself.” They do so rightly. The preceding passages demonstrate that mind (*Geist*), even in its most concrete, objective form, is just actualized logical thought. The consequence of this fact is that Kojève cannot draw the ontological conclusion he claims to be able to from Hegel’s philosophical system.

### Bloom and the Political Implications of Kojève’s Lectures

Kojève’s lectures on Hegel’s *Phenomenology* have been used in the American context as a weapon against Marx and Marxism since their publication. The broad popular acceptance of the thesis offered in Francis Fukuyama’s 1992 book *The End of History and the Last Man* in contemporary political discourse is a testament to the power of this weapon.<sup>52</sup> If history truly *terminates* in the institutional framework constituted by the modern state, capitalist society and the nuclear family, if there cannot possibly be any alternatives to this institutional matrix, and any attempt to construct a viable alternative will consequently fail, then the possibility of abolishing capitalism, of abolishing capitalist exploitation, that is, the possibility of communism, is foreclosed.

Allan Bloom, in his introduction to the English translation of Kojève’s lectures, seeks to excavate these political implications from the latter’s “reading” of Hegel. The central argument of that reading according to Bloom is that “for Hegel, and for all followers of Hegel, history is completed, that nothing really new can again happen in a world.” This reading of Hegel, Bloom confidently asserts, is “fully justified.” Such a position might seem “utterly paradoxical” and “wildly implausible,” he acknowledges, but Kojève, Bloom continues, “easily shows” the “ineluctable necessity of this consequence” for anyone who understands human life to be historically determined. This ineluctability is purportedly demonstrated by means of a single conditional sentence: “For if thought is historical, it is only at the end of history that this fact can be known; there can only be knowledge if history at some point stops.”<sup>53</sup> Bloom takes himself to be justified in using this premise as the foundation for an attack on Marx: “It is precisely Marx’s failure to think through the meaning of his own historical thought that proves his philosophical inadequacy and compels us to turn to the profounder Hegel.”<sup>54</sup>

Perhaps the most obvious problem with this assertion of ineluctability, and therewith of Kojève’s “reading” of Hegel in the most general sense, is that one can possess knowledge of the fact that thought is historical while at the same time knowing that *one’s own thought* is historically determined, because *no one* is outside history, *no one* exists at its “end.” This

chapter seeks to show that there is ample textual evidence to demonstrate that both Hegel and Marx are acutely aware of this fact, that each figure takes his own thought to be historically determined and envisions not an end of history as such, but the end of a *particular* historical development. For the time being, it can be noted here that it is simply absurd to presume that the author of the statement that “each individual is in any case a child of his time; thus philosophy, too, is its own time comprehended in thought”<sup>55</sup> did not think to apply this insight to his own philosophy.

The one-sentence assertion about Marx’s “philosophical inadequacy” being “prove[d]” and about us being “compel[led]” to turn to the “profounder” Hegel is similarly characterized by a range of obvious problems. To take just a couple of examples, one might refer to the fact that Marx’s project is, as he himself repeatedly insists and as Georg Lukács and Moishe Postone<sup>56</sup> have illumined, limited to a historically-specific critique of the capitalist mode of production, as well as to the fact that Marx famously insists that the bourgeois relations of production represent the final stage not of history as such, but only of the *prehistory* (*Vorgeschichte*) of humanity, that history in the proper sense has not yet begun, that it will not begin until the bourgeois relations of production and therewith social classes as such have been abolished and communism has been established.

If these assertions by Bloom are, in fact, characterized by obvious problems, if Kojève’s reading is, in fact, as “utterly paradoxical” and wildly implausible” as it appears to be, they nevertheless represent the philosophical foundation of a certain strand in the contemporary scholarship on Hegel’s political philosophy that reads him as offering a defense of capitalist society. Consider first Bloom’s continuation of his articulation of the political implications of Kojève’s project in the following one-sentence conditional argument: “If concrete historical reality is all that the human mind can know, if there is no transcendent intelligible world, then, for there to be philosophy or science, reality must have become rational.”<sup>57</sup> Indeed, Bloom continues by claiming that

the enunciation of the universal, rational principles of the rights of man in the French Revolution marked the beginning of the end of history. Thereafter, these are the only acceptable, viable principles of the state. The dignity of man has been recognized, and all men are understood to participate in it; all that remains to do is, at most, to realize the state grounded on these principles all over the world; no antithesis can undermine this synthesis, which contains within itself all the valid possibilities.<sup>58</sup>

The foundational status of these assertions to more recent developments in the scholarship on Hegel’s political philosophy can be observed in Paul Franco’s attribution to Hegel that the institutions of bourgeois modernity



"are *the* institutions that realize most fully the rational freedom of individuals and therefore cannot be essentially improved upon or superseded by future developments."<sup>59</sup>

Let us first question the basis of Bloom's liberal triumphalism. Is the dignity of *all* persons truly recognized in the contemporary capitalist states? Even if all are "understood" (an instructive qualifier) to participate in them, do the formal institutions of representative governments truly reflect the democratic principles they purport to uphold? It might be argued in response that these problems simply reflect the fact that the states grounded on these "universal, rational" (i.e., abstract) principles have not yet been completely "realized."

Such a response, however, cannot account for the *ideological function* performed by the "the universal, rational principles of the rights of man [enunciated] in the French Revolution." As Marx explained in his analysis and critique of the 1793 French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, "the practical application of the rights of man to freedom is the right of man to private property."<sup>60</sup> This right of man to freedom is based "not on the association of man with man, but on the separation of man from man. It is the *right* of this separation, the right of the *restricted* individual, withdrawn into himself."<sup>61</sup> Thus what is presented as universal and rational, and is uncritically accepted as such by as recent a figure as Bloom, is in fact nothing more than an ideological reflection of that which is particular in social and historical terms: "None of so-called rights of man, therefore, go beyond egoistic man, beyond man as a member of civil society, that is, an individual withdrawn into himself, into the confines of his private interests and private caprice, and separated from the community."<sup>62</sup> In thus separating each member of society from every other, in causing each such member to presume that she is not dependent on any other for the realization of her freedom, this abstract and illusory *political* emancipation constitutes a barrier to concrete and real *human* emancipation, the latter of which requires that persons *unite* to struggle for their collective freedom, that is, to struggle for the abolition of the material conditions of their exploitation.

Let us then also note how this "reading" of Hegel's philosophy is deployed by Bloom as an instrument of anticommunist ideology: "[N]o antithesis can undermine this synthesis," he confidently asserts, because it purportedly contains within itself "all the valid possibilities." This formulation is apparently a response to Marx's statement in the first volume of *Capital* that "capitalist production begets, with the inexorability of a natural process, its own negation,"<sup>63</sup> a negation or "antithesis" consisting in "the expropriation of a few usurpers by the mass of the people."<sup>64</sup> Bloom wrote this "Editor's Introduction" in 1968, so one might seek to dismiss this political rhetoric as a historical product of the mid-twentieth century. Yet this ideological framework has permeated not only the popular discourse of recent capitalist ideology, as evidenced by Fukuyama's

1992 book,<sup>65</sup> but also certain strands in the contemporary Hegel scholarship, as evidenced by the previous 2002 attribution to Hegel the position that bourgeois institutions “cannot be essentially improved upon or superseded by future developments.”

At the same time, it is of course true that for Hegel the French Revolution articulated the power of reason over reality, but it is also true that, as Marcuse explained, for him that revolution’s principle consisted in the formulation that “thought ought to govern reality.”<sup>66</sup> This formulation, in particular the critical distance indicated by the inclusion of *ought*, should not be conflated with the earlier notion—one that simply reproduces the original caricature of Hegel as a conservative accommodationist—that “reality must have become rational.” Indeed, this *ought*, it will be argued here, is apparent in virtue of the basic fact that Hegel’s depiction of the rationality of the modern state form in the *Philosophy of Right* is not empirical at all, and his rejection of empiricism reflects a fundamentally critical dimension of his project, one that illumines many key parallels to Marx’s critical project.

This latter point will require some elaboration. Hegel, in his identification of civil society with the moment of particularity, notes that “[p]articularity in itself is boundless extravagance, and the forms of this extravagance are themselves boundless.” He further explains that these infinite or “boundless” (*maßlos*) forms which constitute particularity in-itself do not return to themselves, or these forms “do not form a closed circle,” but rather extend to “spurious infinity” (*schlechte Unendlichkeit*).<sup>67</sup> Consider Hegel’s description of this concept in the *Science of Logic*:

The infinite as thus posited over against the finite, in a relation wherein they are as qualitatively distinct others, is to be called the spurious infinite, the infinite of the understanding, for which it has the value of the highest, the absolute truth. The understanding is satisfied that it has truly reconciled these two, but the truth is that it is entangled in unreconciled, unresolved, absolute contradiction; it can only be brought to a consciousness of this fact by the contradictions into which it falls on every side when it ventures to apply and to explicate these its categories.<sup>68</sup>

Rational cognition is for Hegel a dialectical movement in which thought opposes itself in its relation to the posited object it confronts and returns to itself at a higher level of determinateness, and so civil society is the moment of irrationality that can only be resolved by the rational political state, for it does not contain within itself the capacity to return to itself, or the capacity to sublimate its own contradictory character; rather, *it is the infinite movement of thought in opposition to itself*, or the moment of “absolute contradiction.” The necessity of civil society derives from its

expression of the subjective freedom of its members, but this freedom of subjectivity or particularity is formal or indeterminate, and *the thinking through of this concept reveals not its determinateness but, rather, its fundamental contradictoriness.*

Marx agrees. Consider the following passage from the *Grundrisse*:

[In bourgeois society] the general interest is precisely the generality of self-seeking interests. Therefore, when the economic form, exchange, posits the all-sided equality of its subjects, then the content, the individual as well as the objective material which drives towards the exchange, is freedom. Equality and freedom are thus not only respected in exchange based on exchange values but, also the exchange of exchange values is the productive, real basis of all equality and freedom . . . [T]he attempt [is made] to hold fast to the simplest economic relations, which, conceived by themselves, are pure abstractions; but these relations are, in reality, mediated by the deepest antithesis, and represent only one side, in which the full expression of the antithesis is obscured . . . The proper reply to them is: that exchange value or, more precisely, the money system is in fact the system of equality and freedom, and that the disturbances which they encounter in the further development of the system are disturbances inherent in it, are merely the realization of equality and freedom, which prove to be inequality and unfreedom.<sup>69</sup>

Thus, for both Hegel and Marx, the thought of oneself and one's relation to others on which civil society is based, if thought through to its completion, does not culminate in the determinateness of that thought, but rather in its contrary. In political terms, the freedom and equality of *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* are, according to both figures, revealed, if dialectically thought through, to be unfreedom and inequality. This is a radical argument. To state the matter in terms of Marx's framework, the ideology of freedom and equality in the exchange process of capitalist society presupposes and obscures the exploitation and domination endemic to its production process. So while for Hegel the rational political state resolves the contradiction that *is* civil society, for Marx the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production do not resolve themselves but, rather, find their completion in what he terms "the universal crisis" (*die allgemeine Krise*).<sup>70</sup>

In Hegel's view, civil society is a realm defined by the *irreducibility* of its "disorganization" (*Desorganisation*).<sup>71</sup> Importantly, this term is employed by Hegel not in the introduction to his discussion of civil society, as a problem to be overcome in the course of its internal logical movement, but, rather, in the *Anmerkung* to the second-to-last paragraph of the civil society section, thereby indicating that it is a critically important element of Hegel's *final* argument about civil society: The alienated

structure of social mediation that is bourgeois society does not, for Hegel, culminate in the realization of right or freedom but, rather, in its *antithesis*. The “confused situation” that is civil society “can be restored to harmony only through the forcible intervention of the state” and so “the totality [the state] must also be endowed with sufficient strength to bring particularity [civil society] into harmony with the ethical unity.”<sup>72</sup> The logical necessity of the movement from civil society to the state therefore derives from the fact that civil society is not capable of self-correction.

Marx agrees with Hegel that capitalist society the moment of absolute contradiction. He notes concisely in the *Grundrisse* that “[c]apital is itself the moving contradiction, [in] that it presses to reduce labor time to a minimum, while it posits labor time, on the other side, as the sole measure and source of wealth.”<sup>73</sup> The complete development of the capitalist mode of production is for Marx the moment in which its absolutely contradictory character is made explicit. Thus, Marx’s mature critique of the capitalist system, rather than being based on a critique of Hegel’s analysis of civil society in the *Philosophy of Right*, is, in fact, the *materialist justification* of Hegel’s critique of that institution.<sup>74</sup>

From this view, the most important *political* distinction between Hegel and Marx consists in Hegel’s conception of the state as possessing the capacity to sublimate the contradiction that is civil society, whereas for Marx the state does not possess this capacity. An understanding of this distinction requires reference to the fact that for Hegel the rational political state as he conceptualizes it is distinct from the modern liberal conception. In his critique of the latter, in which the state is understood to be nothing more than an instrumental means to the ends of the individual subjects who constitute it, Hegel rejects its reliance on both the form of instrumental rationality and its conceptual content—physical or economic security. Hegel, in contrast to early modern liberal philosophers, conceives the state as an “end in itself.”<sup>75</sup> Marx, in contrast to Hegel, argues that “the state, in contrast to all earlier national formations, was from the beginning subordinate to bourgeois society, to its production, and never could make the pretense of being an end in itself.”<sup>76</sup> So Marx critiques Hegel’s autonomous conception of the state and advances the alternative position that the state is in any case subordinate to bourgeois society and its production.

Thus, it is explained in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* that “[t]he proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the state, i.e., of the proletariat organized as the ruling class.”<sup>77</sup> This *definition* of the state as a particular class in society organized as the ruling class is incompatible with the notion that the state is autonomous from its society. Gramsci extends this formulation by defining the state as “the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its

dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules.”<sup>78</sup> According to these definitions, the modern state defended by Hegel is the bourgeoisie organized as the ruling class, and Hegel’s philosophical argument for the rationality of the modern state form is consequently to be understood as an ideological justification for the political rule of a particular class in society, the capitalist class ruling politically through the representation of its particular interest *as* the universal interest. Indeed, it is explained in the *German Ideology* that

each new class which puts itself in the place of the one ruling before it, is compelled, merely in order to carry through its aim, to represent its interest as the common interest of all the members of society, that is, expressed in ideal form: it has to give its ideas the form of universality, and represent them as the only rational, universally valid ones.<sup>79</sup>

Thus, we have a distinction between Hegel’s conception of the modern state as autonomous from civil society and Marx’s conception of the modern state as subordinated to bourgeois society and its production. But this distinction raises an interpretive matter that should be understood as rendering it only apparent. If Hegel’s argument is that the modern state is in any case autonomous from its society and Marx’s argument is that any such state is subordinate to the society to which it is related, then, in the view of this author, Marx is right and Hegel is wrong. But Hegel’s argument in the *Philosophy of Right* is not empirical at all. His argument is limited to the position that *the rational form of the modern state* is necessarily autonomous from its society (a fact the implications of which are lost on a number of contemporary commentators). If it is assumed that actually existing capitalist states are, in fact, subordinate to the bourgeois societies to which they are related, and if it is *also* assumed that Hegel is *aware of* this subordinated character, then the *Philosophy of Right*, in depicting the rational political state *as* autonomous from its society, can be interpreted as a critique of *all* actually existing capitalist states. These do not seem to be unreasonable assumptions to make.<sup>80</sup>

## Conclusion: Hegel, Marx and History

Just as with every other concept in that text, Hegel presents world history (*Weltgeschichte*) in the *Philosophy of Right* in a way that requires reference to his idealist logic. It is in this final, ultimate moment of “right” that, “in its universality which has being in and for itself, the particular . . . is present only as ideal.”<sup>81</sup> Particularity, the object of thought’s cognition, is *phenomenal* in character: It is the manifestation or expression (*Äußerung*) of thought itself to itself. It is now observed that conceptual universality contains within itself the totality of particularity because the

latter can only *be* the latter at all insofar as it is constituted by the former. This is the final determination in both the *Science of Logic* and the *Philosophy of Right*. In an important passage supporting this interpretive argument, Hegel explains that mind is itself nothing more than the pure thought of logic, or “reason” (*Vernunft*) itself:

[S]ince mind in and for itself is reason, and since the being-for-itself of reason in mind is knowledge, world history is the necessary development, from the concept of freedom of mind alone, of the moments of reason and hence of mind’s self-consciousness and freedom.<sup>82</sup>

Historical development is the achievement of “form”<sup>83</sup> in a way that is identical with how thought, through its own internal movement, achieves the determination of form from the formless identity of itself with itself in its original immediacy. Moreover, just as Hegel resolves the problem of the relative priority of thought and its object through his argument that the end of thought is for it to make itself its own object and to achieve correspondence with itself, he explains in this final section of the *Philosophy of Right* that “mind is its own deed; for mind is only what it does, and its deed is to make itself . . . the object of its consciousness, and to comprehend itself in its interpretation of itself to itself.”<sup>84</sup> Indeed, mind is *defined* in terms of the movement of thought itself—it is “the movement of its own activity in gaining absolute knowledge of itself and thereby freeing its consciousness from the form of natural immediacy and so coming to itself.”<sup>85</sup> World history, as the temporal instantiation of this logical movement, thus culminates in the “absolute opposition” between the “secular realm” and the “intellectual realm,” an opposition which endlessly persists despite the fact that “both are rooted in a single unity and Idea.”<sup>86</sup> This “single unity and Idea” are the absolute Idea. It is in the movement to world history that the concept of right finds its completion, and world history is the actualization of the logical movement that *is* the absolute Idea. The incompatibility of this conclusion with Kojève’s reading should now be apparent.

Indeed, this incompatibility is apparent from the basic fact that the *Philosophy of Right* finds its completion not in the state, but rather in world history. Hegel’s explanatory strategy is to begin with the concept of right or freedom and to depict the thinking through of that concept to its complete determinateness, and that complete determinateness is found only in the totality of world history. Why does world history constitute for Hegel a more determinate form of right or freedom than the modern state form? The fact that the *Philosophy of Right* finds its completion in world history poses a dispositive problem for the attribution of an “end of history” thesis to Hegel. The notion described earlier, that, for Hegel, the bourgeois nuclear family, the market-governed realm of civil society and the modern constitutional state represent the final and complete

institutional constellation, is contradicted by both the text of the *Philosophy of Right* and the requirements of dialectical logic. Any determinate concept or “individual” thought-content necessitates its dialectical sublation in the form of *indeterminate* universality. A consideration of Hegel’s political philosophy in terms of his logic thus demonstrates the *ephemeral* character of *any* instantiation of the universal concepts in virtue of which any object is thought at all. Thus, again, contra Kojève, all “Being,” including being “as revealed by the Concept,” is *finite*.

History therefore does not “end” for Hegel, and in particular it does not terminate in the institutions of his contemporary time. The modern world (“the Germanic realm”) is *an* Idea in the respect that it contains both subjective and objective freedom within itself, but *any* determinate conceptual universal sublates itself, becoming rather an *indeterminate* conceptual universal and inaugurating another dialectical sequence. “When philosophy paints its grey on grey,” Hegel famously explains in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, “a [*eine*] form of life has grown old.”<sup>87</sup> Thus what has “ended” according to Hegel is the historical process by which the particular form of social and political life depicted in the *Philosophy of Right* is realized (“As the thought of the world, it [philosophy] appears only at a time when actuality has gone through its formative process and attained its completed state”), and, in what is crucial for understanding Hegel’s relation to Marx, that form of social life has grown old, as demonstrated by Hegel’s comprehension of it in the *Philosophy of Right*.

Thus, Hegel’s transition from the state to world history should be read as reflecting the position that a *particular* historical development has ended, culminating in the modern state form, but history necessarily progresses *beyond* that form. Understood in this way, the parallel between Hegel and Marx becomes striking. Consider the following passage from Marx’s 1859 preface to the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*:

The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production—antagonistic not in sense of individual antagonism, but of one arising from the social conditions of life of the individuals; at the same time, the productive forces developing in the womb of bourgeois society create the material conditions for the solution of that antagonism. This social formation brings, therefore, the pre-history of human society to a close.<sup>88</sup>

Marx’s critical analysis of the capitalist production relation (and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic, and philosophical—that is, ideological—forms corresponding to that relation) is therefore justified according to Hegel’s own premise that the form of life represented by that social relation and the state corresponding to it has grown old and is thus susceptible to philosophical comprehension and critique.



Marx is thus entirely in accordance with Hegel's own premises when he offers the following concise distillation of what he takes to be the original contribution of his critical project in a letter to J. Weydemeyer on March 5, 1852, indicating first and foremost his demonstration that the existence of classes, and therewith the institutions of bourgeois modernity, are particular in a historical sense and thus have a definite end:

My own contribution was (1) to show that the *existence of classes* is merely bound up with *particular historical phases in the development of production* [*bestimmte historische Entwicklungsphasen der Produktion*], (2) that the class struggle necessarily leads to the *dictatorship of the proletariat*, (3) that this dictatorship itself constitutes no more than a transition to the *abolition of all classes* and to a *classless society*.<sup>89</sup>

In making these demonstrations, Marx opposes himself to those figures who "regard the social conditions in which the bourgeoisie is dominant as the final product, the *non plus ultra* of history."<sup>90</sup> As has been outlined earlier, such figures still exist, and they have appealed to a misleading and unrepresentative interpretation of Hegel's philosophy—in particular to a single text which Hegel himself abandoned as a part of his philosophical system—in an attempt to legitimate the contemporary dominance of the bourgeoisie as the "final product" of history.

It has been argued here that Hegel's decision to end the *Philosophy of Right* with world history rather than the modern state form should be understood in terms of Marx's later notion that it is only the *Vorgeschichte* of human society that finds its completion in bourgeois society. From this view, the *history* of human society only begins with the progression *beyond* that final form of prehistory. Thus, the *real* significance of Hegel's determination of the world historical process by the requirements of dialectical logic is that every historical form of social organization, including that of Hegel's own time, logically necessitates its own sublation in favor of another historical form that constitutes a more adequate realization of human freedom (that renders the concept of freedom more determinate). Thus, Marx's critique of political economy can be interpreted as just making explicit that critical dimension that is left implicit in Hegel's political philosophy, for that critique is nothing more than the explicit application of dialectical logic to modern bourgeois society, an application that is implicit in the *Philosophy of Right's* transition from the state to world history.<sup>91</sup>

Indeed, Marx's critique of political economy begins with the observation that the laws of classical economics are presented by their ideologist representatives in universal terms, as the only valid ones, and his critique is directed toward the end of revealing these laws to be socially and historically particular, that is, as particular to the historical epoch in which

the capitalist mode of production predominates. This end is apparent in the preface to the first German edition and, especially, the afterword to the second German edition of the first volume of *Capital*. Georg Lukács is thus correct in understanding Marx's project as a "historical critique of economics which resolves the totality of the reified objectivities of social and economic life into *relations between men*."<sup>92</sup>

Instructively, and in a way that represents an appropriate conclusion to this essay, it is in the context of this critical project that the very idea of the "end of history" is explicitly taken up by Marx in *The Poverty of Philosophy* and explained in terms of the ideological framework within which it is situated:

Economists have a singular method of procedure. There are only two kinds of institutions for them, artificial and natural. The institutions of feudalism are artificial institutions, those of the bourgeoisie are natural institutions. . . . When the economists say that present-day relations—the relations of bourgeois production—are natural, they imply that these are the relations in which wealth is created and productive forces developed in conformity with the laws of nature. These relations therefore are themselves natural laws independent of the influence of time. They are eternal laws which must always govern society. *Thus, there has been history, but there is no longer any.* There has been history, since there were the institutions of feudalism, and in these institutions of feudalism we find quite different relations of production from those of bourgeois society, which the economists try to pass off as natural and, as such, eternal.<sup>93</sup>

## Notes

- 1 Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk*, in Band 5 of *Gesammelte Schriften*. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1972–1989), 5, 1, 59; *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 13.
- 2 See *Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels Werke*. (Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag, 2006) (hereafter MEW), 21, 268; and *Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels Collected Works*. (New York: International Publishers, 1975) (hereafter MECW), 21, 360.
- 3 See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe*. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988), 1, 308.
- 4 G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (hereafter PhG), Band 9 of *Gesammelte Werke*. (1807) (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1968) (hereafter GW). Cited by page number. *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). Cited by paragraph (§) number.
- 5 Jean Hyppolite, *Genèse et structure de la Phénoménologie de l'esprit de Hegel*. (Paris: Aubier, 1946); *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Samuel Cherniak and John Heckman. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974).

- 6 See Pierre-Jean Laarrière and Gwendoline Jarczyk, *Les premiers combats de la reconnaissance*. (Paris: Aubier, 1987). See also their more recent *De Kojève à Hegel: 150 ans de pensée hégélienne en France*. (Paris: Albin Michel, 1996).
- 7 See Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, trans. Joel Anderson. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995); Ludwig Siep, *Anerkennung als Prinzip der Praktischen Philosophie: Untersuchungen zu Hegels Jenaer Philosophie des Geistes*. (Freiburg: Alber Verlag, 1979); Andreas Wildt, *Autonomie und Anerkennung: Hegels Moralkritik im Lichte seiner Fichte-Rezeption*. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1982); and Jürgen Habermas, "Labor and Interaction," in *Theory and Practice*, trans. John Viertel. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), 142ff.
- 8 See Otto Pöggeler, "Hölderlin, Schelling und Hegel bei Heidegger," *Hegel-Studien*, vol. 28 (1993): 370–372.
- 9 See Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), esp. 89ff.
- 10 See Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); and Jon Stewart, *The Unity of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit: A Systematic Reading*. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2011).
- 11 See Philip T. Grier, "The End of History and the Return of History," 183–198; Reinhart Klemens Maurer, "Hegel and the End of History," 199–222; and H. S. Harris, "The End of History in Hegel," 223–238 in Jon Stewart (ed.), *The Hegel Myths and Legends*. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996).
- 12 Robert B. Pippin, *Idealism as Modernism: Hegelian Variations*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 260.
- 13 See Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). See also Robert Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).
- 14 Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy*, 272.
- 15 Allen W. Wood, "Hegel and Marxism," in Frederick C. Beiser (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 414–444.
- 16 This latter issue, as with so many others, is best expressed by Walter Benjamin. See, in particular, the passage from his *Das Passagen-Werk* with which this chapter begins.
- 17 Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy*, 275.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 278.
- 19 See Alan Patten, *Hegel's Idea of Freedom*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 29ff. See also Pippin's response in his review of Patten's book in *History of Political Thought*, vol. 22, no. 3 (October 2001): 560–564.
- 20 Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. James H. Nichols, Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), 18.
- 21 Eric Michael Dale, *Hegel, the End of History, and the Future*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 4.
- 22 See G. W. F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik* (hereafter WL). *Erster Band. Die objektive Logik. Erstes Buch. Die Lehre vom Sein* (1832). GW 21; *Erster Band. Die objektive Logik. Zweites Buch. Die Lehre vom Wesen* (1813). GW 11; *Zweiter Band. Die subjektive Logik oder die Lehre vom Begriff* (1816). GW 12; *The Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller. (New York: Humanities Press, 1999).

- 23 WL, 21:33; 49.
- 24 WL, 21:32; 48.
- 25 WL, 21:8; 28.
- 26 PhG, 11; ¶5.
- 27 PhG, 12; ¶6.
- 28 Kojève, *Introduction*, 148.
- 29 *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften I* (1817, rev. 1827, 1830), Band 8 of *Werke Theorie Werkausgabe*. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970). Cited by (§) number; *The Encyclopedia Logic*, trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting and H. S. Harris. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991).
- 30 WL, 21:69; 82.
- 31 WL, 21:85; 99 (emphasis added).
- 32 WL, 12:249; 839.
- 33 WL, 12:161–162; 742.
- 34 Béatrice Longuenesse, *Hegel's Critique of Metaphysics*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 217.
- 35 WL, 12:236; 824.
- 36 WL, 12:177; 759.
- 37 WL, 12:250; 840.
- 38 WL, 12:252; 842.
- 39 Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 169–170.
- 40 WL, 12:253; 843.
- 41 WL, 12:252; 842.
- 42 WL, 12:127; 705.
- 43 WL, 12:129; 707.
- 44 WL, 12:130; 708.
- 45 WL, 12:178; 760.
- 46 WL, 12:172; 753–754.
- 47 WL, 12:237; 825.
- 48 *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften III* (1817, rev. 1827, 1830) (hereafter EG), Band 10 of *Werke Theorie Werkausgabe*. Cited by section (§) number; *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, trans. William Wallace and A. V. Miller. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).
- 49 EG, §383Z.
- 50 EG, §382Z.
- 51 PR, §4Z.
- 52 Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*. (New York: Free Press, 1992).
- 53 Kojève, *Introduction*, x.
- 54 *Ibid.*, xi.
- 55 G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (1821) (hereafter PR), Band 7 of *Werke Theorie Werkausgabe*, 26. Cited by (§) number; *Hegel: Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. H. B. Nisbet. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 21.
- 56 See his excellent *Time, Labor, and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
- 57 Kojève, *Introduction*, xi.
- 58 *Ibid.*
- 59 Franco, *Hegel's Philosophy of Freedom*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 341.
- 60 MEW, 1:365; MECW, 3:163.
- 61 MEW, 1:364; MECW, 3:162–163.
- 62 MEW, 1:366; MECW, 3:164.
- 63 MEW, 23:791; MECW, 35:751.

- 64 Ibid.
- 65 See the protest against Fukuyama's evangelistic book in Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kampf. (New York: Routledge, 1994), 85.
- 66 Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*. (New York: Humanities Press, 1963), 6.
- 67 PR, §185Z.
- 68 WL, 21:127; 139.
- 69 MEW, 42:170–174; MECW, 28:176–180.
- 70 MEW, 23:28; MECW, 35:20.
- 71 PR, §255A.
- 72 PR, §185Z.
- 73 MEW, 42:601; MECW, 29:91.
- 74 See Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, 81.
- 75 PR, §258.
- 76 MEW, 42:4; MECW, 28:6.
- 77 MEW, 4:481; MECW, 6:504.
- 78 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. (New York: International Publishers, 2010), 244.
- 79 MEW, 3:47; MECW, 5:60. See also Gramsci's sophisticated explanation of the capitalist state's mechanism of self-perpetuation: "It is true that the state is seen as the organ of one particular group, destined to create favorable conditions for the latter's maximum expansion. But the development and expansion of the particular group are conceived of, and presented, as being the motor force of a universal expansion, of a development of all the 'national' energies. In other words, the dominant group is coordinated concretely with the general interests of the subordinate groups, and the life of the state is conceived of as a continuous process of formation and superseding of unstable equilibria (on the juridical plane) between the interests of the fundamental group and those of the subordinate groups—equilibria in which the interests of the dominant group prevail, but only up to a certain point, i.e., stopping short of narrowly corporate economic interest" (*Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 182).
- 80 See Matthew J. Smetona, *Hegel's Logical Comprehension of the Modern State*. (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013), 107ff for my initial attempt to develop this argument.
- 81 PR, §341.
- 82 PR, §342.
- 83 PR, §349.
- 84 PR, §343.
- 85 PR, §352.
- 86 PR, §360.
- 87 PR, 28; 23 (emphasis added).
- 88 MEW, 16:9; MECW, 29:263–264.
- 89 MEW, 28:508; MECW, 39:62–65 (emphasis in original).
- 90 MEW, 28:508; MECW, 39:65.
- 91 See Smetona, *Hegel's Logical Comprehension of the Modern State*, 251ff for my first attempt to draw this connection.
- 92 Georg Lukács, *Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein*, in Band 2 of *Georg Lukács Werke*. (Berlin: Luchterhand, 1968), 221; *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971), 49 (emphasis in original).
- 93 MEW, 4:139–140; MECW, 6:174 (emphasis added).



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